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CINEMA

Tying, untying and tying again

By S. S. PRAWER

STANLEY CAVELL:
Pursuits of Happiness
The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage
283pp. Harvard University Press.
£12.25.
0 674 13905 1

The remarriage of two Hollywood stars - whether impermanent and unsuccessful, like that of Richard Burton to Elizabeth Taylor, or lasting, the second time round, like that of Robert Wagner to the late Natalie Wood - has always fascinated gossip-columnists and their readers. Now we find Stanley Cavell, Professor of Aesthetics at Harvard and author of a celebrated ontology of film (*The World Viewed*, first published in 1971), discovering remarriage as a central theme in a group of related Hollywood comedies made between 1934 and 1949: *The Lady Eve*, *The Philadelphia Story*, *The Awful Truth*, *His Girl Friday*, and *Adam's Rib*; a group to which Cavell adds two other films of the period with which these share family resemblances: *It Happened One Night* and *Bringing Up Baby*.

Such comedies, enjoyable singly, gain by being seen as a group. They are what they are, as Professor Cavell puts it, in view of one another. Their heroines tend to be married women rather than young girls on the brink of marriage; they are played by a talented group of actresses born between 1904 and 1911 (Rosalind Russell, Katharine Hepburn, Irene Dunne, Barbara Stanwyck and Claudette Colbert) who are joined by such photogenic partners as Cary Grant, Spencer Tracy, Clark Gable and Henry Fonda. The questions these films typically ask and answer are what constitutes a marriage; what makes two go into one in such a way that neither partner compromises his human dignity. They are "comedies of equality", turning on a search for reaffirmation in the course of which each partner grows in self-knowledge as well as in appreciation of the other's legitimate claims. Something internal to the task of marriage causes "trouble in paradise" - as if marriage, which is a ratification, were itself in need of ratification.

That ratification is found when marriage itself becomes romance and



Claudette Colbert and Clark Gable in *It Happened One Night*, 1934 (see caption overleaf for publication details).

adventure. In making it so, the central characters of these films have to accept their sexual identity and desire. They fight for recognition, for the acknowledgment of rights and obligations, for mutual understanding and tolerance. There are verbal battles, struggles of will in which each gives as good as he or she gets, attempted flights from commitment, until, in the end, forgiveness is won, or a reprieve - a new beginning, a new innocence. *Pursuits of Happiness* underplays what used to be called the "screwball" element in these central characters - it is significant that the term "screwball comedy", by which works like *Bringing Up Baby* were known, never occurs in this book - but it shows very well how such films manage to "subvert" farce and approach the spirit of late

Shakespearean romance. *The Winter's Tale* indeed, that greatest of all plays of remarriage, of a marriage-partner lost and found again, may be seen as their ideal type.

Professor Cavell has much that is timely to say about the moral and social implications of these themes. His dogged pursuit of them through seven chapters, each devoted to a close reading of one film, should help to dispel an image of American culture popularized by Leslie Fiedler: a vision of American man on the run, harried into the forest or out to sea, down the river or into combat - anywhere to avoid the confrontation of a man and a woman which leads to the fall into sex, marriage and responsibility; of a chamber of horrors disguised as an amusement-park "fun

house". Cavell acknowledges the vision described by that last phrase (which I take from Fiedler's essay "The Novel and America") when he contrasts the "black" world of *His Girl Friday* with the "green" or "golden" worlds of the many films that take their protagonists to affluent Connecticut; but he shows how the threat which it poses to private happiness can be neutralized, in classic Hollywood comedies, through the reaffirmation implicit in remarriage. The Fiedler vision is not denied; but in a comedy that unites night and day, imagination and perception, dream and responsibility, it can be faced by two strong partners newly bonded together.

The economic and social implications of the films discussed are never neglected but Cavell is not content

with the usual notions of class-privilege, money-power and economic "basis" or sub-structure. He recognizes that the milieu of conspicuous wealth in which so many of these comedies have been set makes them "fables of the Depression", dream-gratifications for the poor and out-of-work. But that is neither the only nor even the chief function wealth has in the "remarriage" cycle. Luxurious living, financial security, are necessary because they provide an environment of leisure within which the experiment of the film can take place. The sparring, the conversations dispelling enmity and reaffirming love, require lavish expenditure of time, time which enables the central characters to find one another and readjust to one another. Discussions of the "leisure-world" presupposed by these comedies leads naturally into a discussion of Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* - a theory Professor Cavell unexpectedly finds less adequate for an analysis of films like *The Philadelphia Story* than de Tocqueville's discussions of "aristocracy" and its equivalents in American society.

This is perhaps the most surprising feature of *Pursuits of Happiness*: that the entertaining films with which it deals can be so constantly illuminated by works that belong to a quite different order of discourse. By references to Hobbes, for instance, or to Kant, to Wittgenstein, to Heidegger; to Milton's tract on divorce; to the literary critics' distinctions between the world of Shakespearean and that of Jonsonian comedy.

But what about the charge that the works discussed in *Pursuits of Happiness* offer nothing but "escapist" entertainment? In the course of a passage that seeks to define what the idea of reprieve signifies in *His Girl Friday*, Cavell gives his own characteristic answer. "In one way it may be taken as 'escape' (in which case you must keep escaping); in another way it may be taken as refreshment and recreation (in which case you are free to stop and think)." No book about the art of Hollywood that I have ever read can make its readers stop and think more effectively than this one - even if their aesthetic and moral valuation of some of these works differs from that of its author.

Cavell's "readings" makes us appreciate the overall shape and

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structure of the films he discusses as effectively as their technical details: details of lighting, focus, camera movement, which are invariably integrated about their function, their place in a total, developing meaning. "Observing what the camera does in a given sequence," he tells us, "is an essential part of 'reading' a film" and he proceeds to suit the action to the word by providing illuminating exegeses of (for example) the tracking-shots and interior lighting of *His Girl Friday*. He shows himself sensitively aware of the varying narrative styles that characterize the small group of actors who play central roles in the seven films he discusses, as well as the directing-styles of Kurosawa, Hawks, Capra, Sturges and McCarey. He explains very well what different directors manage to find in different stars - how Howard Hawks, for instance, discovers Cary Grant's "photogenic tendency to thoughtfulness, some inner concentration of intellectual energy".

He also has a sure eye and ear for thematically important ideas and objects in the films discussed: items of food, in *It Happened One Night*, and their relation to the prevailing theme of literal and metaphorical hunger; the notion of the puppet-stage, or Punch-and-Judy show, in *Adam's Rib*, and its relation to the bed-curtains at the end of the work; or the newspaper, not only in *His Girl Friday* and *It Happened One Night*, but also in films of remarriage whose central figures are not journalists. And what a place he has for the significance of places and settings. The "green world" of Connecticut, the "black world" of prison-house and death-cell, the mansions of the rich, restaurants, newspaper offices, buses, the open road are all shown to have particular and important functions in the films in which they are observed. Scenes we all remember - from the animated titles of *The Lady Eve* to the "Walls of Jericho" sequences of *It Happened One Night* - become more memorable, and more significant, when *Pursuits of Happiness* has taught us to relate them to underlying myths, or arguments, or cinematic self-references, in the works that contain them.

This last idea - the way a film draws attention to itself as a film - is pursued through all the essays that make up *Pursuits of Happiness*. We are shown, in fascinating detail, how characters in the works discussed act as surrogates for the director, how the activity of the camera and the photographed nature of the world we see on the screen are emphasized by devices that include film-within-film, snapshots or production-stills that almost (but not quite) fill the screen-space, doubling or splitting of projected presences, and so on. Objects in films, the book suggests, are "always already displaced, *trouvés*": the camera, it shows, tends not only to reveal the actors' "invisible presence", but also its own invisible presence. Another quality of the camera we are taught to recognize is its tendency to give "a natural ascendancy of the flesh-and-blood actor over the character he or she plays in the film". Directors of comedy like to draw attention to this last fact by all sorts of references within the movie.

Among the other virtues of this stimulating study are its awareness of the significance of absences as well as presences (why have the women in these films fathers but no mothers? Why are there so few children? and the fact that most of the time it knows when not to go on elaborating. Cavell shows himself fully aware of the impossibility of discussing all possible interpretations; he therefore chooses a line that seems to him interesting and important and follows it through as far as it will take him, to "conclusions" but ones which are provisional, so that others are prompted to continue them. That we, as readers, can take part in the conversation the book conducts. We can ask, for instance, how the role that William Demarest is shown to play in the structure and argument of *The Lady Eve* relates to that which he plays in so many other Preston Sturges films, from *The Great McGinty* to *Miracle of Morgan's Creek* and beyond, and how the extraordinary aura Demarest acquires through his presence in *It Happened One Night* is exploited by the film-makers. We can also ask, for instance, how the role that William Demarest is shown to play in the structure and argument of *The Lady Eve* relates to that which he plays in so many other Preston Sturges films, from *The Great McGinty* to *Miracle of Morgan's Creek* and beyond, and how the extraordinary aura Demarest acquires through his presence in *It Happened One Night* is exploited by the film-makers.

World. Or we might take Professor Cavell's analyses as models for thinking about other groups of film-comedy in which marriages are tested: the cycle of the 1960s, for example, which begins with *Lover Come Back* in 1961 and runs through *Divorce American Style* (1967) to the undervalued *Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice* of 1969.

Inevitably we shall find ourselves disagreeing with some of the analyses in *Pursuits of Happiness*, which sometimes stop too short. There are also, it must be admitted, a few irritations. Among these we must count some disconcerting stylistic lurches from academic ponderousness to punning and unnecessary horrendous imagery. There is also a certain amount of cultural over-association - I do not find my experience of soft-focus images of Claudette Colbert in *It Happened One Night* enriched by having them compared to Bernini's sculptured St Teresa, nor do I find any resemblance worth mentioning between Cary Grant precariously clinging to a car in *Bringing Up Baby* and Europa clinging to her bull. And then there are the glibly dismissive asides. In *The World Viewed* the victim was the Cabaret of Dr. Caligari; in *Pursuits of Happiness* it is *Clint Eastwood*, of which we are told that "the craft lies in its effects, not in its basis... the workmanship is arbitrary, not authoritative". Orson Welles's career is tragic enough without having his one uncompromised masterpiece taken down in this offhand way by one of the few critics whose word really counts for something.

What is one to make of the relegation of *Dead of Night* to the category of "films merely meant to terrorize us", as opposed to *The Night of the*

Judgment and the ratings

By Michael Church

ROBERT SKLAR:
Prime-time America
200pp. Oxford University Press.
0 19 502765 5
HUNTER DAVIES:
The Grades
268pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson
£8.95
0 297 77953 2

Whenever educated liberals enthuse about "popular" television drama, wise readers reach for their humbug detectors. Of all the clerical treasuries, fashionable today, that of pretending to discover the virtues of high art in corporation-concocted mass entertainment is possibly the most prevalent.

Robert Sklar, chairman of the film studies department at New York University, is nothing if not an educated liberal, and in *Prime-time America* he deals almost exclusively with mass entertainment conceived by large corporations. That he manages to do so with only occasional traces of humbug is no small achievement. He opens with disarming admissions of ignorance, and he dis-arms further with occasional hints most part about mental and visual junk.

As it floods not only America but also much of the world, however, this is important junk, replete with messages. Sometimes Sklar's analytical machine is overworked, laboriously discovering truths about the nature of sit-com squabbles or about the contagiousness of sub-psychiatric jargon. Sometimes, however, he hits on truths which should have been obvious but seem to have gone unremarked.

Afternoon soap operas reveal laboriously in domestic emotional truisms: prime-time turns them into formula comedy. On the other hand, the problems of getting and keeping a job, he notes, have recently tended to give romance suburban myths in the American viewpoint, notably in the prime-time strategies now pushing more "hostility" into the wake of the vanished American

Living Dead, where we can find "a perception of the instability of the fact of human existence, its neighbouring of the inhuman, the monstrous". True enough, the film directed by Cavalcanti, Hamer and others uses a gentler, more traditional idiom than Romero's violently explicit one; but do not its framing sequences (with Mervyn Johns as their central figure), the mirror episode (with Googie Withers), and the ventriloquist episode (Michael Redgrave with his neurotic best) suggest "instability", the neighbouring of the human and inhuman [or monstrous] as clearly as *The Night of the Living Dead*?

Pursuits of Happiness persistently underestimates - in a way one would have thought impossible after Richard Collis's *Talking Pictures* - the role played by Hollywood script-writers in determining the tone and import of their films. It is one thing to say that improvisation and rewriting constantly alter scripts during production - no one who has read Rosalind Russell's amusing and illuminating account, in *Life is a Banquet*, of the way *His Girl Friday* was made, can have any doubt about that - but to analyse the conversational exchanges and the narrative sequence of *It Happened One Night* without so much as telling us who had the original idea and who provided the initial script that Capra worked on is auteurism run mad. Ben Hecht must have seen Professor Cavell coming when he smuggled into his scripts all sorts of tell-tale signifiers: the presence, for example, of a character called Egelhofer in *Nothing Sacred* as well as in *His Girl Friday* (and, of course, *The Front Page*, from which the last-named film derives) announces Hecht's co-authorship.

dream, but this new humour is safely generalized away from the specific grievances which might send viewers off to bed in a really ugly mood. The recent visit of the spectre of redundancy to British TV's *Coronation Street* comes nearer the bone than anything Sklar found in America, though his researches are now four years old and things may have changed since.

As every schoolboy now knows, the blood has been syphoned out of *Starky and Hutch*. The result, says Sklar, is a new obliqueness in visual techniques and a new allusiveness in verbal ones: the advertisers and moral guardians who forced the change have achieved little by it. Sex, on the other hand, is relatively unconfined: it's a crime-control tool for all kinds of outrageousness in *Soap*, and the universally accepted source of innuendo in less raunchy family fun.

Sklar's investigations are too relaxed to yield much of interest on the intensifying battles being fought backstage in American television, as the religious and political Right exert their awesome economic pressure, but he has some piquant things to report about advertising. After a Federal Trade Commission ruling that names be named in competitive commercials, one survey found that viewers were as likely as not to misidentify the sponsor, naming the denigrated brand instead. Other surveys consistently show that most viewers think commercial breaks are a fair trade-off for the entertainment they provide. British viewers, regularly shaken out of their TV-induced coma by brilliant ads for larger or better, would surely agree.

It may not have been within his brief, but the cable TV explosion is only hinted at. In Sklar's account, American homes now have this facility, some complete with key-operated chastity locks to protect child viewers from masturbation. If a brand called Ugly George can hook half Manhattan with weekly videotapes of nice girls he picks up on the street, those locks are surely needed.

Dick Cavett, America's Mervyn Bragg, gets an affectionate nod to himself. He is observed in public intercourse with his old philosophy professor who suddenly turns him



Betty Hutton, Diana Lynn and William Demarest in a scene from *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* (1944). Preston Sturges's brilliant wartime farce. The illustration is taken from *The Movies* by Richard Griffiths, Arthur Mayer and Ellen Bower, which is now available in a revised and updated edition (560pp. Columbus Books, £12.95, 0 80287 002 X).

Our way of viewing films is rapidly changing. More and more people are finding it possible to see the same work, repeatedly rather than just once: film-libraries and film-courses and cable companies in the United States offer multiple showings of the same movie on the same day or in the same week; and the growing availability of video-recorders make private study of whole films and individual frame-sequences more and more common. At the same time, technical advances in television projection (including screens with adjustable aspect-ratio) promise to

help to close the gap which still exists between the image seen in the cinema and that seen in our living-rooms. This cannot but make us more conscious of the benefit of going to a worthwhile film the kind of sustained and repeated attention we give to a worthwhile book; and it is therefore good to have an interpreter as informed and sensitive as Professor Cavell to help us deepen our experience. Books like *The World Viewed* and *Pursuits of Happiness* show with gratifying clarity that in academic film-criticism the structuralist and semiotic game is decidedly not the only one in town.

by turning the tables. "What have you learned from your guests?" he asks. Cavett later tells Sklar, "It's a little like school... it's like a continuing education." Whereupon Sklar, the good liberal, waxes religious. "And because of Dick Cavett, we continue our own liberal education." Any time now, incidentally, heaven will open for Sklar and his friends: Mervyn Bragg's *South Bank Show* is to be broadcast in America.

Over much of the book, the shadow of things British hangs heavy. *Till Death Us Do Part*, of course, spawned a large family of American spin-offs. America's Public Broadcasting Service (largely British) is a constant reminder of what good television is all about, and Britain is the exemplar even in the realm of criticism. Sklar notes with envy that in Britain critics review programmes "after they're aired": in America, criticism is principally a preview service. Even in his description of a game show the paranoia creeps in; Ned Sherrin (for it is he) "is portraying the American fantasy of the urbane British intellectual - quick-witted, sharp-tongued, imperturbable, and infinitely superior... Some panelists respond... by approaching the experience as an oral exam."

Sitting at the feet of the president of Universal television, Sklar records a defence of the status quo: "Popular entertainment has always had some violence with it. There are two very compelling things to people - life and death. Life is directly tied to sex. Death is directly tied to violence. It's no real surprise an audience would want to watch shows dealing with these subjects."

Sitting at Law Grade's feet Hunter Davies records a not dissimilar noise. "An ideal evening for me to watch at home would be *The Paraders*, or perhaps *The Saint or Danger Man*. Then a good half-hour comedy, like *On the Buses*. Then something like *The Main Chance*. Throw in the news, and for me that would be a lovely evening." Lord Grade immediately follows this up with a ringing defence of Mrs. Whitehouse ("Don't give me that permissive society, I don't believe in it") but his kinship to his transatlantic cousins in television job - in America

POETRY

The namers of things

By T. A. Shippey

W. H. AUDEN and PAUL B. TAYLOR:
Norse Poems
256pp. Athlone Press. £7.95.
0 485 11226 4

There is not much poetry anywhere on a level with the *Elder Edda*, and maybe no one can translate it as it deserves: the world has grown too soft. Still, if anyone could, it ought to be Auden. His own art - as John Bayley said in these pages recently (*TLS*, December 11, 1981) - aimed at "a bleak impersonal severity". He seemed himself to be a "scald or court poet", he came as close as any modern writer can to those bodiless authoritative namers of things who produced the *Rígsstula* (which tells how kings and classes arose), or the *Völuspá* (which says how the worlds began and how they will end), or the *Hávamál*, which reaches back 1600 years from us and 600 from its composer to the ruin of the Gothic kingdom in central Europe and the great deeds Gibbon forgot. "It was not now; it was not yesterday, but long ago; it was long past." Auden's directness and scorn for fineness of words or grammar are (in those lines) exactly those of his original. Certainly this volume, of forty-one poems - twenty-five more than in the familiar Faber paperback of 1973 - is the best introduction to Norse literature which has ever appeared in English. And yet reading it you are still conscious of what has been lost, what can no longer be said.

Translating Eddic poems into English seems so easy. The syntax is straightforward, the verse-forms are plain and natural, the vocabulary is often oppressively close to the English of everyday. Just short of the climax of the *Atlakviða*, Gunnarr, king of the Burgundians, who has ridden on a dare into the hands of Atilla the Hun, declares that before he will "pay" ransom with the Niflung gold he must see the heart of his brother Högni. Suspicious, the Huns butcher a cook instead. But when they bring his heart, Gunnarr says: *Hér hefir ec hiarra Hialla ins blautu, dlet hiarra Högna ins froeca, er mic hiaz, er a biðit lígr; hifitz hálfo meirr, er i bristit lá.*

The subtitle of *The Grades* is "The First Family of British Entertainment", and if the family is the focus of the periphery contains much of interest about the world they have triple-handedly created. From charleston competitions in the Mile End Road via control of the Palladium to domination of the entire showbiz scene, their personal story is simultaneously the story of how the variety tradition came to permeate British family viewing. "It's no good making money mit your brains", Lew and Bert were told by their redoubtable mother Olga in 1935. They became agents forthwith, and by a combination of luck, determination and convenient connections quickly swam to the top. The process by which the agent-impressarios wrestled power from the theatre owners makes an exhilarating tale, and Hunter Davies tells it well. But how all three brothers moved into film and television, at a time when the brand-new variety war was voraciously consuming rare talent, makes less encouraging reading: they may have presided over some individual productions of very high quality, but their control over both the creation of goods and the marketplace in which those goods were sold has had a stultifying effect on the medium as a whole.

"They didn't necessarily change the world for the better... but they have given pleasure. We shall not see their like again", intones Davies at the end of his book, by which time readers who have stayed the course will have grown rather tired of such sentiments. No matter what the clever brother, the ruthless brother or the charming brother (and they are no angels) do, only the gentlest criticisms are permitted by this loving biographer.

The Grades have been caught in the nick of time: the *Titanic* has now sunk, *The Muppets* have been sold for a mess of pottage and Lord Laws' entire empire looks as if it may be crumbling. *The Grades*, however, will live on in a most poetically just form. Hunter Davies's book is now to be turned into a BBC drama-documentary, under the baton of the man who created that notable cine-variéte *The Family*. Michael Grade, meanwhile, has gone to a top television job - in America

Every word except four goes straight into modern English. Translating almost verbatim:

Here I have the heart of Hjaltil the coward,
Not like the heart of Högni the bold,
Much it quakes as it lies on the plate.
It quaked more by half when it lay in his breast.

Many things in this are hard to understand, and many more are prohibited by our official culture. Why does Gunnarr want his brother's heart? How can he want it and at the same time proclaim its superiority to all substitutes? Should he not care for a moment about the wretched cook? How elementary to think that courage is not a matter of "moral fibre", but just plain "guts"! Still, one can't help feeling, just a little tinking with the alliteration, and this will be in verse practically by itself.

It doesn't go. Auden's translation is exactly the same as the above for the first two lines, except that "Not like" is replaced by "Unlike", following the form of the original *dlet*. Even that seems wrong, to my ear, for in English you can be "rather unlike", "fairly unlike", and half-tones are not Gunnarr's style. The next two lines come out as:

It trembles much, as it lies on the trencher,
Still it trembled more, when it stayed in his breast.

The emphatic repetition *lígr* I had had to go in favour of "stayed", the latter word needed for alliteration; the word "trencher" has crept in. This is no doubt accurate. *Blíð* may well have meant, to a Norseman, a wooden board, not a china plate. But "trencher" means nothing at all to us, though we have heard of "trenchermen". Has it come in to alliterate with "tremble"? Or is there another faint pressure on the translator, which has also eliminated the rude and scornful *hálfo meirr*, "more by half"?

Native idioms have moved down-market since the time of the *Edda*. Translating from Old English or Old Norse, you find again and again that the words and phrases go straight into modern English equivalents: but then they sound vulgar. *Göngom baug sta*, cry the young princes in *Völundarkviða*, "let's go see the ring!"

The Last King

When the last king has gone into the dark
There will be mourning, though the mourners may
Not know their grieving's cause, nor even mark
That what they do is grieve. And on that day
The sun will seem unwilling to appear,
Its breathings faint unseasonably chill;
But there will be no sweating mob to cheer
The farewell speech and axeman's glinting skill
Or panic at a sudden mazzie-flash
And crack. The last king will not leave us thus.
His dying, silent, soft as falling ash,
Occurring with no ceremonial fuss
Will be enacted in a hotel room
After his undramatic abdication,
Hearing the whisper, in the deepening gloom,
Of alien seas; his slow assassination
Performed by his own treasonous appetites.
So he will lie, the table at his side
Bearing no royal relics; the fitful lights
From curtain chink and passing cars outside
Show only his dark spectacles instead.
As he, fat bag containing cooling bones,
Lies incognito on the common bed.
And afterwards, no orchestra of moans,
No formal, public panoply of grief,
Gun-carriage, sleek black plume or muffled drum.
Yet his uncommon spectra, this last leaf
Now fallen from the doomed tree will become
A drifting presence; insubstantial, faint,
Ubiquitous, a whiff of something rare.
The scent of gold; heard, too - complaint
Of ancient instruments on evening air;
And seen at fading moments in the night,
Gold gleam in black recess, lost coin, a glow
Of tiny lamp, quick spark, a dying light.
Whose ultimate extinction we now see -
Pretender, slave, republican or clerk
Will disinherit all, for all will be
Mysteriously diminished by that dark.

Vernon Scannell

Nothing else shall you ever drink,
Never what you wish,
Ever what I wish.

The maiden submits; back goes Skirnir with a wedding-day; tells Frey before he has so much as dismounted, and gets the passionate, graceless, ungrateful reply:

Long is one night, longer are two,
Endless the thought of three.
Many a month has moved more swiftly
Than this half of a bridal eve.

Even, I think, the hints of myth in all this - for Frey is god of increase, Skirnir maybe "the shining one", the giantess an image of ice and rejection - come through in Auden's poem, softening the tale of statutory rape. Many of the others are just as good.

This volume contains the twenty-nine poems of the *Codex Regius*; the six poems in similar style added to them in standard editions of the *Edda*; further associated poems from the *Saga of King Heidrek*; the "Lay of Erik" about the historical Erik Bloodaxe, killed at Stainmoor in the North Riding in 954; and the magnificent Christian vision of "The Sun Song". It is hard to give more than a rumour of the variety this comprises.

The whole thing has been done with great scrupulousity, from the preparation of "new" translations by Paul Taylor to the full versions by Auden (who, however, did not work from the English but from that and the Icelandic at once), and to the final editing by Professor Taylor once more. Because of the old and intimate relationship between the languages of the North, everyone now may well think he can do better; but probably no one could. This is a book to keep and write in the margins of till you die. I would pay a lot for a volume of introductions and notes.

Evil was on them as in they looked.
This is less natural ("beheld"), less ambiguous ("asked for"), and it has lost the complex of meaning around *opin*.

By contrast a more obviously high-wrought poem like the *Skirnirskald* draws a zest and cunning from Auden which is absolutely right. The god Frey falls in love from afar with a giant-maiden; sends his servant Skirnir to woo for him; persuasion and bribery having failed, Skirnir turns to threats and magic runes, a curse of filth and frenzied lust:

Hrimgrímr shall have you, the hideous troll,
Beside the doors of the dead,
Under the tree-root ugly scullions
Pour you the piss of goats.

Auden's poems accordingly seem to get better as their originals rise towards complexity, but to quail before plain grandeur, especially when this is also savage, ferocious, jocular. The heart of the *Völundarkviða* (to my mind) is the deeply dark pun on *vél*, at once a precious thing, a beautiful thing, a work of art, and a complex stratagem of blood and

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2000 years on

By Peter Green

F. W. WALBANK:

The Hellenistic World
287pp. Brighton: Harvester. £18.95
(paperback, Fontana, £2.95).
0 7108 03109

JOHN BRISCOE:

A Commentary on Livy
Books XXXIV-XXXVII
422pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £25.
0 19 81455 5

The Hellenistic Age - those three crowded cosmopolitan centuries between the death of Alexander and Cleopatra's defeat by Octavian - offers an eerie, and at times disturbing, sense of déjà vu to any student of contemporary society. The resemblances are numerous and close. We find the same widespread reverence for democratic institutions to authoritarian regimes, the same sense of psychological and aesthetic fragmentation, the same anti-rationalist trends, the same social solipsism and self-absorption, the same active promotion of the critic at the expense of the creator, the same obsessive pursuit of affluence, exotic religious cults, fads in astrology and magic, off-beat eroticism; the same preoccupation with mere bigness (or, out of reaction, smallness), the same retreat from political involvement, the same cultivation of private inner gardens (Epictetus or other) at the expense of the public domain, the same tendency to treat scholarship as big business, to fuel academic development on government (or, now, industrial) patronage, the same cringing sense of facelessness in Megalopolis, the depersonalized world of the Big City.

It is not, then, to be wondered at that after years of comparative neglect - there is still a regrettable habit among historians of treating all Greek history later than 323 as a faintly distasteful appendix to higher things - the study of Hellenistic institutions, long promoted for their own ends, by professional papyrologists, should be today enjoying something of a boom. What is surprising is the absence of a really good, penetrating, comprehensive synthesis of this extraordinary period in the English language. We have had numerous excellent specialist studies, often on a massive scale, eg. Rostovtzeff's *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (1941), and P. M. Fraser's scarcely less magisterial *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (1973), a unique work which the Oxford University Press, for perverse reasons best known to itself, has allowed to go out of print, apparently for ever. Such general studies as exist (eg. those by Ferguson, Peters, Bradford Welles, or Tarn and Griffith), though full of useful material on a variety of topics, tend to be selective, ahistorical in organization, and, worse, confusing.

This fault is especially apparent in the (for the most part wholly inadequate) attempts to deal with the admittedly complex political evolution and relationships of the Successor Kingdoms. Tarn and Griffith offer a brief summary, but this is so concentrated as to be virtually incomprehensible to the layman for whom it is intended. Others largely ignore the political history as such, and concentrate rather on broad general topics, or on the malign indirect influence of the *Annales* school here, giving the erroneous impression that the Hellenistic age was a static, consistent epoch during which no changes of real significance took place in the *polity*. Since, as we do get it chopped up for the sake of tidiness, between the various individual Kingdoms, Ptolemaic, Attalid, Seleucid, Antigonid and the rest; the result is a kaleidoscopic mess, full of bewildering cross-references and repetitions.

Rostovtzeff (a loner, in this as in other things) was always acutely conscious that the Hellenistic world must be treated as an independent entity, not as a mere appendix to the classical world, and studied in evolutionary

terms. This ideal seems to have been lost sight of in the English-speaking countries. We have nothing remotely comparable either to Edouard Will's *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique* (1966, 1979) or to Claire Préaux's *Le monde hellénistique* (1978) for comprehensiveness, comprehensibility and detailed documentation. Yet even in these excellent French scholars the approach is still more fragmented than one would like; at times (and more often as time goes on) I find myself turning back, with immense relief, to the old-fashioned (ie. chronologically planned, and paginally footnoted) narrative of Benedictus Niese's *Geschichte der griechischen und makedonischen Staaten seit der Schlacht bei Chaeroneia* (1893-1903), a work which may need updating in the light of new epigraphical and papyrological evidence, but is not nearly so far gone in obsolescence as some modern scholars would have us believe. Three fat volumes of clarity, sanity and respect for *testimonia*: those were the days.

F. W. Walbank's *The Hellenistic World*, then, comes at the right time, and has a very visible gap to fill. I opened it with high hopes: its author has made Polybius his life's work, and, like Niese, has produced on him (also, as it happens, in three fat volumes) a work of equal clarity, sanity, and respect for *testimonia*, among the best and (I would judge) most durable commentaries of the century. There is almost in *The Hellenistic World* that air of similar respect. Walbank's erudition is predictably wide as well as deep, his mastery of the essential documents assured: he quotes, frequently and with telling effect, from sources literary and non-literary, many of the latter little-known. He is also commendably up-to-date on many vexed questions of interpretation, and it is perhaps as a *résumé* of current scholarly thinking that *The Hellenistic Age* has most value for the student.

Walbank is clear and perceptive on the "shifting and uneasy relationship between the Greco-Macedonian ruling class and the native populations"; he is not over-awed by the residual propaganda about the supposed Hellenizing mission of Macedonian veterans or Greek traders and bureaucrats. He knows that the gymnasiums, theatres, temples and other evidence of Hellenism which crop up in the far reaches of the Seleucid empire were primarily for the benefit of the expatriate ruling class - ancient equivalents of the European Club in British India or the American PX, perquisites of an ethnocentric enclave. Economically, Walbank is also up to date: he pre-emptively demolishes the "large-scale experiment in bureaucratic centralism and in mercantilism" concerned rather to prevent cheating than to secure the most efficient results; he reminds us that the Hellenistic era "was not characterized by any substantial transformation of the forces of production" and he trots out all the currently favoured answers to the perennial question, "Why is the Greek view of the possibilities open to technology so restricted?" from cheap labour to the technical incompetence, from conservatism of investment to social contempt for the banalities.

So far so good, and Walbank has a great deal of value to offer. The trouble is that much of it will only (as so often with such books) be of real use to those who know something about the subject already; like so many experts, Walbank cannot always quite visualize what, for the layman, will be baffling, what a dry, there are stretches of prose here in which the regrettable phraseology of paper used by Fontana seems to repeat an equal greyness of mind. It is, of course, hard to compress a complex subject without sounding either aphoristic or impenetrable, and Walbank obviously finds aphorisms suspect. What, for instance, were the stakes at stake in Rome's showdown with Antiochus III (192-188)? John Briscoe, in the latest volume of his *Commentary on Livy*, offers, in just over three pages, a clear analysis. Antiochus wanted to reconstitute the

Seleucid empire as it had stood at the death of Seleucus I, complete with a European toe-hold beyond the Bosphorus. He had no plans to conquer all Greece, much less invade Italy; that did not stop him standing up for his supposed "ancestral rights" of Thrace and Hannibal to mull over threats from the East, as from Africa, but had no original intentions of destroying the Seleucid empire. As Badian long ago argued (a view



A clay bust of Persephone from Syracuse, early third century. From Morgantina Studies, Volume 1. The Terra-cotta by Malcolm Bell (226pp with 150 plates. Princeton University Press. £38.70. 0 691 03946 1)

Apostasy and after

By Averil Cameron

POLYMNIA ATHANASSIADI-FOUDEN:
Julian and Hellenism
An Intellectual Biography
245pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £17.50.
0 19 814846 1

For some of his contemporaries, and for generations of modern scholars before and after Gibbon, the Emperor Julian has represented the essence of the "conflict" between Christianity and paganism. Two fourth-century emperors - Constantine, the first Christian ruler of the Roman Empire, and Julian, born into the Christian imperial family, who not only apostatized from Christianity but tried to bring back paganism revamped along Christian lines - seem all too easily to stand for the polarities of late antique religious thought. In fact, however, every aspect of Constantine's Christian progress from his "conversion" to his ambiguities. As for Julian, he long maintained an outward Christianity, even when his own idiosyncratic ideas were well developed. Nor was he above writing a slyish panegyric on the hated Emperor Constantine (the son of Constantine), and when Constantine died and Julian succeeded he led the funeral procession to Constantine's church of the Holy Apostles in Christian Constantinople.

The effect of recent scholarship has been to whittle down the evidence of struggle between the two emperors. It is now difficult, for instance, to see of a "pagan revival" at the general acclamation, and in seem more useful than conflict as a way of understanding Christian/pagan relations. Obviously Julian is even though there have already been two very recent biographies in English by G. W. Bowersock and Robert Browning. Polymnia Athanassiadi-Fouden's differs from them

unconvincingly challenged by Briscoe) the two sides lurched into war without really meaning to, by a series of accidents. It would be hard to deduce any of this from the ultra-brief reference by Walbank (p. 237): I was left, as so often, with the feeling that this text, especially on historical events, was more Delphic than mere considerations of space required.

This is partly the fault of the book's arrangement. Walbank begins well enough, with a crisp run-down on the sources, a glance at Alexander's career and subsequent influence, and a chapter on the chaotic period 323-301, during which Alexander's marshals, such as Ptolemy, Antigonos One-Eye, manoeuvred and fought over the spoils of empire. But after Ipsus (301) he abandons his chronological survey altogether, and only picks it up again, somewhat haphazardly, to describe Rome's intervention in the Balkans. Thus the crucial third century is not viewed in evolutionary terms at all: the reader is forced to piece the period together as well as he can from random, and at times repetitive, scraps of historical information flung out *en passant* during a series of general chapters on Ptolemy, Seleucids, and the Greco-Macedonian homeland. Students on whom I tried the text as an experiment reported severe confusion. There are also brisk surveys of religion, exploration and geography, and "Social and Economic Trends"; a chapter headed "Inter-city contacts and federal states" that seems to have strayed out of some more specialized monograph; and a section on "Cultural Developments" that whips through philosophy, science and technology in one quick conducted

tour after devoting half of a central paragraph to literature.

What does the concerned reader really want, in the last resort, from such a study as this? Some kind of interpretative overview, I would think, tentative answers to large social questions. Walbank does, as I suggest above, come up with some of the current theories, and this is useful; but I was struck throughout by the phenomena he seems to take for granted. Why did philosophers reverse the fifth-century credo of political involvement in order to pursue ataraxia, private freedom from worry? How much will an unglorified phrase like "the diatribes of the wandering Cynics" mean to a non-classicist, and is there not a danger that the uninformed will take both "dialatribe" and "Cynic" in the wrong sense? Why did an increasing emphasis on Ptolemaic ruler-worship mirror "a decline in their real power and in their independence vis-à-vis the native priesthood"? What brought about the "admission of political and perhaps spiritual helplessness" that Walbank detects behind that notorious Athenian hymn to Demetrius the Besieger ("The other gods are far away, or cannot hear, or don't exist, or are indifferent to us, but you are present, as we can see you, not carved in wood or stone, but for real: so to you we pray")? This last question Walbank partially answers - three pages later - with a reference to the reduced power of the city-states and the decline in rationalism; but the connection would be less than clear to someone who was not already prepared for it. This is a useful interim report, but not the *vue d'ensemble* we need, much less a textbook for beginners. The field is still wide open.

In concentrating on the development of Julian's ideas, for which, as a Greek himself, she prefers the term "Hellenism" to "paganism", Cameron, for all that, is still a biography. Curiously, Julian would have approved of that. He knew the importance of personality in history and political life, above all in the case of his relative Constantine (he was the son of Constantine's half-brother), and his own life could be presented as the projection of a deeply individual personality. More than that, Julian is almost the only figure in the ancient world (with the exception of Augustine) of whom a plausible biography can be written - and it is no accident that both belong to the fourth century. But the odd works in which Julian castigated Constantine, lampooned the Christians and defended himself against the unpopularity which his own actions had caused at Antioch, and his generally provocative and attention-seeking behaviour, made it hard even for admirers like Ammianus Marcellinus to avoid criticising him at times. Like most others, this new book oscillates between praise and irritation. Had Julian not been killed in ambiguous circumstances while on his ill-fated Persian campaign, he would surely have soon destroyed his own reputation. As it is, of course, he can be, and usually is, seen through a mist of hostility or romanticism.

The latter is a response which this book does not altogether avoid. For Julian's "Hellenism" was a strange animal, not only in the mind of Julian, but also in that of the author. Somehow, she feels, it represented the spirit and essence of Hellenic *paideia*, whereas the Byzantines (some of whom certainly thought that they were preserving something real) exchanged the spirit for the letter. That there are value-judgements implicit here emerges, for example, in Dr Athanassiadi-Fouden's view of Neoplatonism as "Greek in essence", standing for intellectual freedom as against the " Asiatic determinism of the East". On this, Neoplatonists were the true Hellenes, while the Christians, as longed, as Julian's *Against the Galileans* implied, to the Semitic world.

Perhaps after all there was not much more to Julian than was seen by his fans or his enemies. This book puts the emphasis firmly on the personality of the emperor himself, largely through his own writings. But the quirkiness of that personality disqualifies him from ever being more than a representative of his own peculiar intellectual mix. The romantic Hellenism which the author sees in him owes more to the legend of Julian and to the centuries of Greek history which have intervened than it does to the enthusiastic ideas of the emperor himself.

Patronage and the pursuit of glory

By Stuart Hampshire

HAROLD BALDRY:

The Case For The Arts
173pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.95
(paperback, £2.95).
0 436 03191 4

It is strange that the case for generous national subsidy of the arts has to be stated over and over again in Britain, while it is generally taken for granted in France and Germany particularly in respect of music, theatre and the visual arts. A number of historical reasons can be offered. The most obvious is the longer persistence of Court patronage in Europe, which in Britain was interrupted by the Civil War and the advent of the Puritans. In the last century, only the Prince Consort actively promoted the national collections and shared a European sense of national responsibility for endowment of the arts. At this stage it is tedious to return to one more rehearsal of the arguments, as if we were back with the "bold experiments" of CEMA, W. E. Williams and Maynard Keynes, or even further back, with the endowment of the British Museum and the National Gallery. With evident sincerity and quiet reasonableness Harold Baldry traverses familiar ground; but it is possible that, because he is mild and tentative in argument, he will not convince many of those angry men who resent, disapprove of, or are made nervous by, the government's aid to the Arts through the Arts Council.

A strong brew of different, sometimes contrary, motives come into play and prompt the angry taxpayer to articulate his complaint: distrust and resentment of the apparent élite who are members of the Arts Council; distrust of patronage of any kind, unless it is exercised by individuals or commercial firms; a belief that the liberal arts, unlike the sciences and applied arts, are decorative and not useful in ordinary lives, and that they are a kind of luxury; the irritation felt by popular performers, artists and writers, who have done well in the open market, that others should not be exposed to the same competition and should actually be admired, although they have not earned admiration in the hard way; lastly, a populist feeling that opera and ballet and production of the National Theatre contribute to a high culture, which is largely the possession of well educated and successful members of the middle class, and that it is of little interest to a majority who are also contributing through their taxes.

In meeting these different resentments and hostilities there is no point in denying, first, that the important arts, in their most fully developed forms, do actually engage the strong interest only of a minority, and not a cross-section of the whole population. This will probably remain true for a long time in the future, even though the minority is a

large and growing one. Secondly, there is no point in denying that much of the Arts Council's total grant to the taxpayer goes to the national companies, opera, ballet, theatre, based in London, and that many of the seats at their performances are beyond the reach of many taxpayers, and will long remain so, in spite of the subsidy. Particularly opera, but also ballet, are irreducibly money-consuming arts. From their beginnings they were a form of conspicuous consumption; neither of them can be made very widely accessible in the theatre without either dilution of quality or unmanageable levels of subsidy.

It follows that the ordinary criteria of just and equitable distribution of taxpayers' money will not be satisfied in subsidizing the arts. The arts, like sports and games, are fundamentally and of their nature inequitable, and equity is a concept inapplicable to them. The distribution of talent is capricious and unfair, the appearance of genius is random and unpredictable. The virtuous and well-intentioned do not generally prosper in the arts of imagination, and the great innovators are often spoiled or withdrawn as persons and citizens, often not closely in touch with the warm hearts of their fellow citizens, or with the main flow of contemporary interests.

As in games and sports, there is a painfully clear, unavoidable distinction between the true élite and the luck of more or less competent practitioners. Because of the waywardness of the imagination - as distinct from the discipline and technique which are its necessary supports - the difference is even sharper and clearer in the arts than in sports. The benefits of imagination are not derived or derived and are not methodically acquired, even though the path to them is usually through hard work, example and imitation. Hard work is never sufficient and not always necessary in all the arts, since there is such a thing as the facility of genius, even if it is rare. *The Importance of Being Earnest* was written in a fortnight and is likely to live forever. Virtually nothing is known, or is likely to be known, about the conditions that favour the development of high talent in the imaginative arts, or the sudden appearance of genius. The subsidizing authorities cannot therefore plan their support in any very controlled and rational way. They can only follow the fallible method of taking past achievements of individuals as evidence of likely future achievements, without the guidance of theory.

Given that subsidy of the arts through the Arts Council must continue against all these admitted limitations and difficulties, what justification can be offered for continuing the subsidy at the present level or even for substantially increasing it? If equity cannot be achieved in this

particular distribution of public funds, what important ends can be achieved and what criteria or principles should be applied? The first end to be achieved in public subsidy of the arts is glory, specifically national glory, and as a second and derivative end, a secure place in the minds of later generations, looking back, to the achievements representative of our time.

Glory is now not the most widely used and familiar of moral categories, and its importance is not often admitted by moral theorists, who may find it undemocratic and embarrassing. But it is not an obscure notion and not a vague one. In the history of a nation there occur occasionally mute and inglorious periods in which virtually nothing is contributed to the arts and the national heritage in most of its forms languishes: forgotten, silent centuries or decades slip by, which must have had their conflicts of passion and their moments of high imagination, all now turned to dust and without testimony or witness. In contrast there are the full and noisy and productive decades, in which the performing arts flourish, and literature and painting and music come alive, as it seems, and move into the centre of national consciousness. These are the periods which historians like to dwell upon, and which form traditions. Every body is proud and almost lightly touched at its fringes by the deplored pretensions of the avant-garde. Little reviews, contemporary sculptors and painters, artists in residence at universities, contemporary music, and the so-called performance arts, are, even in aggregate, a small element in the Council's budget. It is unfair that journalists and popular novelists should base their objections to taxpayers' subsidy of the arts, and to the Arts Council, on the Council's relation to the contemporary avant-garde and to experiments in the visual arts and, to some degree, also in literature; this relation is far from the centre of its activities.

It is mean and not accurate, I think, to state or to imply that the panels advising the Arts Council by their decisions influence and twist the ambitions of painters and writers: as if a person might paint or write in a certain way with a view to attracting a grant. This is suggested from time to time. The truth is that even some of the more famous, well-established contemporary poets and novelists turn to the Arts Council when they find that they cannot earn enough by journalism or by working for a publisher, or by other tolerable means, and at the same time work effectively on their next book. It is not obscure and experimental writers, unable to attract readers, who absorb most of the very small sums of money available for individual writers and artists.

State subsidy of the arts is not finally to be defended by social-political arguments or as an aid to education. Even if we were not en-

homogenized mass market which will reliably consume their products; market research and past experience tell them what kind of products constantly have the widest appeal. They are naturally unfriendly to innovatory minorities who may in aggregate disturb the mass market and subvert some of the potential audience, leading them to higher things. Thus every year, as the Arts Council issues its report and the question of the grant comes up again, there are well-timed stories of eccentric and fashionable enterprises unwillingly supported by the virtuous, plain taxpayer, balls of string in the Tate, plays of sex at the National Theatre, and Arts Associations in the far regions sponsoring strange and sometimes subversive festivals.

The fact is that much the largest part of the Arts Council's grant always goes to the national companies: Covent Garden, the English National Opera, the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Another large percentage of the grant goes to other conventional theatres and to orchestras, and other performers of old and respected music. There is a constant weight of commitment to traditional and well-established aesthetic values built into the principles that govern the Council's distributions. The expensive arts are principally the performing arts attached to a repertoire which is only lightly touched at its fringes by the deplored pretensions of the avant-garde. Little reviews, contemporary sculptors and painters, artists in residence at universities, contemporary music, and the so-called performance arts, are, even in aggregate, a small element in the Council's budget. It is unfair that journalists and popular novelists should base their objections to taxpayers' subsidy of the arts, and to the Arts Council, on the Council's relation to the contemporary avant-garde and to experiments in the visual arts and, to some degree, also in literature; this relation is far from the centre of its activities.

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"Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man", 1906, a watercolour by Maxwell Ashby Arnfield. The picture can be seen in an exhibition of British Drawings and Watercolours, 1890-1940, at the Anthony d'Offay Gallery, 9 Dering Street, New Bond Street, London W.1, until March 6.

tering the age of enforced leisure, the case for subsidy would be decisive for intrinsic reasons, and apart from education. It is possible that David Jones, the author of *In Parenthesis*, will be remembered and read long after the contemporary equivalents of W. J. Loebe and A. S. M. Hutchinson, successful in the market place - not to be named but easily identified - are forgotten and unread. Anyone who knew David Jones knows that he could not be deflected from his path by any external agency, and least of all by an Arts Council grant. There was a definite glory in his achievement, both as writer and artist. Not only readers of the *Times Literary Supplement*, but any newspaper reader will remember, and some will actually read or otherwise allude to, a large number of writers and artists of, say, the 1880s, long after they have forgotten the names and characters of the Foreign Secretaries or other statesmen of the decade, or of any other long past decade. Glory, unlike mere success or fame, lives on in the individual's mind and in national consciousness; it is the natural reward of athletes and heroic soldiers in battle, and most of all, of artists and of poets and of composers.

A nation that is unwilling to give solid material encouragement and support to the probable sources of its glory will have a dispirited, nameless history, a dim extension of the material of things. It still seems to me odd that almost any Frenchman is ready to acknowledge this truism, and very few Englishmen; perhaps it is because puritan ethics, which originally included hostility to the Court, and its ways, survives as hostility to all rewards that are not earned through merchandise sold in the market.

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Long-playing label

By Richard Osborne

JOHN CULSHAW:

Putting the Record Straight

362pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.50.
0 456 11802 5

When John Culshaw became Decca's senior producer in 1956, the gramophone was at its second turning point within a decade. The long-playing record had rather anonymously evolved, but it was Culshaw and his team who first recognized the creative possibilities of stereophonic sound. Culshaw was not a gramophone baron in the manner of a Gaeborg or a Legge. Where Legge founded a great orchestra, and with it a gramophonic dynasty which embraced the careers of artists of the stature of Karajan, Klemperer, Schwarzkopf and Cullis, Culshaw was a self-laught maverick exerting a powerful local influence in a company ruled over by two men whose prime passions in life were power and money. Neither Edward Lewis, who had developed Decca from a two-horse outfit in the 1930s to a market leader in the 1950s, nor the mercurial Maurice Rosengarten, who master-minded and underwrote most of Decca's major classical recording projects in the 1950s and 1960s, were much interested in music. Rosengarten, in particular, was an international wheeler-dealer whose idea of a good conductor was a man who made records fast. To him international musicians were so much real estate in whom he invested. Even their royalties went through his own personal accounts. Culshaw, however, Karajan's lawyers rumbled his disingenuous tale about checking for errors.

Putting the Record Straight, which was substantially drafted by the time of Culshaw's death in March 1980, takes us more or less to the end of his time at Decca. As a source of often brutal anecdotes about distinguished musicians it will be eagerly perused. The book is given coherence, though, not by its scabrous table-talk but by the sense it gives of a man at odds with an enervatingly conservative management which tolerated a revolution and its own growing international prestige while steadfastly laying the foundation of its own eventual destruction.

Culshaw first joined Decca in 1946, but those parts of the memoir which deal with his teenage years in Liverpool and his wartime service in the Fleet Air Arm are necessary preliminary to what follows. Like many people for whom music is an obsession, Culshaw was a lonely and meticulous person, jealously guarding the sense of personal integrity which his precocious interest in music had helped form and deepen. Perhaps his mother's early death had something to do with this; that, and

his father's lack of drive and imagination. Culshaw's first hero was a character whom E. M. Forster might well have invented, a Mr Gribble of the Midland Bank, New Scotland Road, Liverpool, who provided for him the pitiful image of what it is "to be a marked man in a large organization". Mr Gribble, Culshaw tells us, ended his days in a gas-filled room. As a teenager, Culshaw wrote incessantly, revising at length and always destroying the final draft (after the war he had two novels published by Secker and Warburg). He also began to puzzle over why a Mozart concerto meant more to him than one by Liszt. (Later, hunting E-boats from an open bi-plane, he would mentally replay entire Mozart concertos, with the result that the A major Piano Concerto K 488 became inextricably connected in his mind with the loss of several colleagues on a misnamed Beauffighter mission.) At about this time, too, he bought his first copy of Compton Mackenzie's monthly paper *The Gramophone* from which he developed a lifelong interest in records and a lifelong inferiority complex about music critics whose style and apparent expertise he passionately wished to emulate.

Both Decca and Culshaw were made by the war. Decca's radar and navigational work greatly enhanced their technical expertise in sound recording. That, and the acutely perceptive ear of the Suisse Romande Orchestra's principal conductor, Ernest Ansermet, meant that Decca quickly dazzled the post-war musical world with a recording of Stravinsky's *Petrushka* of hitherto unequalled aural fidelity. Meanwhile, Culshaw, self-reliant and technically adept, learnt all he needed to know in the Fleet Air Arm; when Gerald Abraham, the musicologist and Russian specialist, recommended him to skip university he took the advice.

Ten years later, he was heading a new young team of engineers and producers: a new breed, hard-working, inventive, unencumbered by personal ties, respectful of musical expertise but unimpressed by the outside egos of most international musicians. Real affection appears to have been reserved for Ferrier, Curzon, Montaux, and Flagstad. Alongside this was, in all key ambitions, ruthlessness in insisting on schedules for the recording of *Tristan und Isolde* which left Decca no option but to engage a largely unknown and anonymous Tristan. In some ways Culshaw's most productive relationship was with Solli, whose rise to fame was to some extent a by-product of Culshaw's own emergent career, but his most musically creative relationships were probably with two very different and talented men, Britten and Karajan. For Karajan, Decca's RCA links promised rich rewards in the United States, where his fame had never really taken root. He was, in Culshaw's view, ruthless and

unpredictable yet possessed of a conducting talent which could on occasion amount to genius. What's more, like Britten, he had a severely practical streak which made him easier to work with than many seemingly more accommodating personalities. The recordings of *Aida*, *Otello*, and *Tosca* belong among Culshaw's finest achievements. Reiner and Szell, ruthless and witty men, also appealed to Culshaw. Sutherland, it appears, did not (though Culshaw is oddly understanding about the interloper Bonynghe) and he relays with relish Beecham's stipulation over a recording of *Messiah* - "I want thousands of people but not that Australian woman".

Peripheral portraits are abundant and pointed. Artur Schnabel emerges as a querulous poseur, preoccupied with favourable recorded balances and employing a conductor, Josef Krips, who cringingly ensured that no orchestra ever played above mezzo forte when the master was at the keyboard. There is Carl Schuricht making eleven attempts to finish the first movement of the *Unfinished Symphony*, all of them at a different tempo; Rafael Kubelick, unassailably conservative, trying to minimize all tension, even in the discords of the *Eroica*; Ernest Ansermet who is accounted "breath-takingly mean"; Bjoerling, who has a chapter to himself, by this stage a terminal alcoholic; and the Vienna Philharmonic, obsessed with conductors who were either dead or half-dead, and ferociously antisemitic. Culshaw's narrative reveals how many bad records are made by a major company. Yet adverse criticism is usually reserved.

At the heart of the narrative, great technical and musical successes are counterpointed by financial skulduggery in Europe and a lack of vision and nerve in suburban minds in London. It was entirely typical of Decca, as Culshaw came to see it, that they should wish to take no credit for personal factors that wrecked those Decca/Alto Sprach *Zarathustra* recordings of 2001. (Karajan thought differently and threatened to sue both Decca and MGM.) Typical, too, was their coolness to Britten, who never pressed his work on the company. After the astonishing success of the recording of the *War Requiem*, the company was stirred into tardy admiration and suggested that Britten should write at least one more record which whilst public demand for such things remained high. Shaw once observed that the English are as incapable of appreciating a benefit as they are of resenting an outrage. It is an observation which would have made a fitting epigraph to this sad, funny, bitter-sweet tale of English innovation and English ineptitude. By a strange wrench of fate, Decca and Culshaw died about the same time. That once proud label is now under foreign control.



"Ah! It's the Woodwind family!"

This musical introduction can be found in a new collection of cartoons by Edward Koren. "Well, there's your problem" (Penguin Books. £1.95. 0 14 00 5967 9).

Knowing the score

By Norman Del Mar

ERICH LEINSDORF:

The Composer's Advocate
A Radical Orthodoxy for Musicians
224pp. Yale University Press. £7.70.
0 300 02427 4

Few things are more revealing, in the worst sense, than conductors' books. As one who in this respect lives in a veritable Crystal Palace, I write these words with my eyes wide open and my heart in my mouth, but they remain inescapable. Even the much-loved Bruno Walter came over as pompous and conceited in his writings and Erich Leinsdorf in this volume is no exception. He emerges as opinionated and insufferable, even though much of what he has to say contains a deal of sound common-sense.

Mr Leinsdorf quickly manages to give offence through his continual sneers at other artists, soloists as well as conductors, with whose judgment he seems as inferior to his own. In this he follows to an extraordinary degree the example of another equally distinguished figure, Engelbrecht, who spoils a no less important and fascinating study, *The Conductor's World*, by just such high-handed derogatory comments. Now, in order to conduct a performance it is essential to believe that one's opinions at that time are right on all counts, but, as I know from my own experience, this leads all too easily to intolerance of the views of others. The truth is that we conductors all have bees in our bonnets but we need infinite tact and good humour when we try to set them down on paper.

The Composer's Advocate originates from a series of seminars on conducting given by Leinsdorf at American universities. The style and somewhat unpolished form of the book reflect the waywardness of such assignments, while its didactic approach is an obvious by-product of lecturing to students. In very little reflects the author's self-satisfaction where scores and his own performances are concerned. However natural this may be it does not make for a well-balanced treatise. Nevertheless despite self-contradictions and conflicting arguments, the book contains far too much of significance for either its weaknesses or its bigotry to outweigh its value as a whole.

Like his predecessors in the field Leinsdorf is a conductor of considerable eminence and enormous experience. The range of his knowledge and ideas is splendidly wide and as the reader dips into the book (by far the best way of tackling it) he is likely to be delighted as often as he is outraged. In any case the one reaction may be as beneficial as the other. It is no bad thing to be

made to reconsider one's opinions, whether to find them shaken or the more firmly fixed.

If serendipity is the best approach, this is to some extent because the chapter headings - "Knowing the Score", "Knowing the Composer", "Knowing Musical Tradition", "Knowing the Right Tempo", etc - give only a limited indication of the very mixed bag of thoughts and shafts of wisdom contained within. *Marriage of Figaro* spread over more than twenty pages of the greatest interest, and extensive notes on how to approach - or how not to approach - the *Eroica* Symphony, hidden within the chapters on Right Tempo and Musical Tradition respectively. If one does not agree with the half of the latter it need not be any the less absorbing on that account.

It is quite curious, therefore, to find Leinsdorf actually going astray on the odd occasion (the totally wrong interpretation of the baroque phrases at the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, for example, on page 157, or the faulty rewriting of the *accelerando* in the Overture to Strauss's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* music on page 147). These are among the few exceptions, however; most of the instances in which one may cross swords with Leinsdorf are over controversial questions of artistic judgement, such as his extraordinarily strict championing of metronome marks (including those of Beethoven) or his blinkered acceptance of current dogma in respect of "Baroque Notation" in the works of composers up to and including Schumann. These are highly charged issues and it is dangerous to pontificate upon them as a matter of blanket principle. Critics and pedagogues may rant and rave as they will, but like repeats, *appoggiatura* and many other allied subjects, such questions should be allowed to remain a matter for personal artistic taste and conscience, to be thought and re-thought anew in every work and on every occasion, each soloist and conductor for himself.

Nevertheless, everyone enjoys reading informed opinions on a subject about which he, or she already has knowledge and views, and I have no doubt whatever that Mr Leinsdorf's book will be read and enjoyed by a great many, including conductors and would-be conductors, however much and however often they may raise their eyebrows.

Volume 1 in a new series of year-books, *Popular Music*, is titled "Folk or Popular? Distinctions, Influences, Continuities" (222pp. Cambridge University Press, £18). The volume, which is edited by Richard Middleton and David Horn, contains ten essays on different aspects of popular music including folk music, blues, rock, traditional Hungarian songs and Bob Dylan.

Chinua Achebe is probably the best-known modern African novelist writing in English. Things Fall Apart, his first novel, began the Heinemann African Writer's Library, the most important collection of African fiction in English, and he was from the beginning its series editor. Achebe has worked in broadcasting (as director of talks and then of the external service of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation) and as a university teacher, most recently at Nsukka; and along with his novels he has written short stories and poetry. Anthony Appiah, with John Kyle and D. A. N. Jones, talked to him in Cambridge last summer.

I think the main thing to say is that although I was brought up in the village I was born into a Christian family, and my father was a first generation Christian, a convert. So my background was that of a very severe Christian upbringing. We read the Bible on Sundays. We went to church twice on Sundays. And so I was, in a sense, an outsider in the traditional culture. Fortunately, we were not too far removed physically from the tradition. The village was made of up two parts, if you like: the Christians and the non-Christians. And they lived side by side. So that if one was interested or curious about what was going on on the other side of the village - then it is possible to acquire some insights. But also, I think it is important to say that my father, though a very devout Christian, as all first generation Christians tended to be, at the same time had a wholesome respect for the tradition he had left. He would "break the kola nut", for example, but he would end up by introducing the name of "Jesus Christ, Our Lord" - producing very interesting sequences!

I think perhaps that this is a reflection of the fundamental Ibo attitude to change. The fanatic was the exception rather than the rule. Because the Ibo have a very strong belief in dualities: things do not come singly, but in twos. That's very important in everything we do. So that if there's one form of religion, there is bound to be another form.

On the whole, it would have been the Christians who introduced the idea of a single-minded, dogmatic belief. It was the missionaries - who had, after all, to be single-minded to travel all that distance to come and tell somebody else that he was worshipping idols. I can't imagine Ibos travelling 4,000 miles to tell anybody their worship was wrong!

My reading at school was very undisciplined, very scattered. I think that as a child of twelve who has not seen many books you just read anything you can lay your hands on. But I think what you require to make you read comes from inside you. If you are interested in stories, if you are moved by language, and fascinated by words, then, if you have the opportunity to read, you are on your way. If you don't have any possibility of reading, then you have a lot more problems, because your imagination doesn't have that push which literature provides - and it doesn't have to be elevated literature. Thrillers, anything at all that opens up possibilities, opens up "magic castles"; this is really what you need at that age.

Of course, if you were strictly in the oral tradition there'd be something else to take its place: the tales told would take the place of the book. But we were no longer in the oral tradition. There was nobody telling us tales in the secondary school; so the book became very important. Still, as a child, the initial impetus came from stories. Stories told in the family. Stories told to mother and my sister; these two particularly. So the greatest single influence was the oral tradition. About that there is no doubt at all in my mind. That is where I took off.

As for the language I used in my books for the conversation of those

the traditional community it would be too large a claim to say I invented it. It was quite clear to me that if you are representing the speech of people who take language seriously, as our traditional elders did, then you have to represent it with care. They did not use words in a shoddy fashion, so I had to create something that would convey that. Now when you come to the modern period, there are also people who speak with care and you will show that in the proper context. Where I use pidgin it is people who are speaking English in a pidgin form that I am representing.

For somebody speaking in Ibo, I would use standard English, of different registers; that is a matter of instinct. One thing sounds right, something else doesn't sound right for a character. Maybe I haven't given enough credit to the influence of English literature, because that's really the basis of my literary tradition, so the registers I use are based, in part, on what I picked up of English literature.

There's a lot of word-borrowing in Ibo language, in fact I think too much. It's now got to the stage where some people speak a mixture of English and Ibo, fifty per cent from each, which is quite annoying. It's not simply a question of taking a word which doesn't exist in this language in order to enrich it - this is normal and should be encouraged. But the excessive use of foreign words sometimes is an attempt to show off; someone speaking Ibo will put in English words just to impress the villagers. Sometimes it's simply the result of incompetence, because the speaker has been removed from Ibo language in his day-to-day life. And then he may get into a state where he cannot sustain conversation in it without recourse to English. This, I would say, is bad.

You ask if young people are losing command of the proverbial language. Well, the proverbial language was never really the business of the young; it was the old people who spoke in proverbs. The young learnt them as they grew up; but even if you knew them - and this was a matter of etiquette - you wouldn't start speaking proverbially to an old man. To do so would be a sign of disrespect. In fact the would-be imitator, call you to order, if you were trying to be clever.

As for the written language: the Book of Common Prayer was done into excellent Ibo - as was the first translation of the Bible. Later on an English "classical" scholar from Cambridge, I think, came on the scene and introduced some hideous Ekeperanto called "Union Ibo"; and that was a real disaster. This is something I feel very strongly about. It was a great disservice to Ibo language.

What I'm trying to do now - one of the many things I am trying to do - is to encourage Ibo writers to forget that Union business and write in their own dialects. And I'm doing that myself. We have had one recital of Ibo poems by living poets at Nsukka and it was quite a success.

You suggest that the time has come for African writers to return to their indigenous languages. I don't



Chinua Achebe

think they should ever have left. I think they should be writing in both if they can. But anyone who can, I think should. Because our languages need that kind of help. I have no plans to do a novel in Ibo, but I do have plans to do a play.

I think it is a matter for individual writers to find for themselves what they want to talk about, what they want to deal with. When you find me talking about celebrating the past, it's usually in answer to questions like: "Why do we want to talk about the past? It's gone." For me, you see, the past is not gone. The past is very much present. And unless we deal with that, unless we understand that, we will just go around bumping our heads on the same obstacles - like clouds. I think the past is extremely important.

We writers are still held in some reserve and suspicion by the powers that be. I think someone who is running something as badly as many are running our countries is bound to be nervous when he sees a man who has a different scheme of reference altogether. Writers do express themselves well and strongly. And they are challenging a whole area of confusion deliberately created by the misuse of language in politics. So I think that they know instinctively that you are an enemy.

Language is our tool, and language is the tool of the politicians. We are like two sides in a very hostile game. And I think that the attempt to deceive with words is countered by the efforts of the writer to go behind the words, to show the meaning.

We have the capacity for diverse identities. I'm an Ibo writer, because this is my basic culture; Nigerian, African and a writer. . . . No black first, then a writer. Each of these identities does call for a certain kind of commitment on my part. I must see what it is to be black - and this means being sufficiently intelligent to know how the world is moving and how the black people fare in the world. This is what it means to be black. Each of these tags has a meaning, and a penalty and a responsibility. And all these tags, unfortunately for the black man, are tags of disability.

I think it is part of the writer's role to encourage the creation of an African identity. You see, I think once you realize how the world is organized, you must then, as a writer, ask: "What am I doing writing stories in this kind of situation? Who is going to read them? What use is all this going to be?" It's a political matter now, so organization comes in. When I talk about setting up an organization of Nigerian writers, this is an attempt to organize writers for the advancement of certain causes which we believe in. Because we know, from looking at the world, that certain dangers exist. Certain perils exist for the black man, for the writer, and so you organize yourself. Literature is one of the ways, I think - at least the way available to the writer - to organize himself and his society to meet the perils of living.

My novels are designed to be

educative at the same time as enlightening and amusing and all the other things literature is supposed to be. All I insist is that my work is not devoid of seriousness or political intent or purpose. This doesn't mean that any old sermon is a short story or a novel. But any good short story, any good novel, should have a message, should have a purpose. This is very clear in all our oral tradition.

Colonization was the most important event in our history from all kinds of angles. If we had the time, this is my hobby-horse. I could really show, to my own satisfaction at least, that most of the problems we see in our politics derive from the moment when we lost our initiative to other people, to colonizers.

We could no longer choose our leaders, they were chosen for us. And then these leaders began to behave in a way that was really predictable. And it is that heritage - of the "warrant-chief", chosen not by his people but because a foreigner approved of him - it is that heritage that we are really suffering from. In fact, what happened here was that the accountability which was part of the traditional system then disappeared. The check which tradition had on the leader was removed. He only had to be acceptable to the British resident.

Do I attach too much importance to the colonial experience? Too much attention to anything will divert you from other things. I don't think that's a justification for denying the truth. I think one has to be careful not to exaggerate. Exaggeration is part of our vocation, I think, but it still has to be kept in control. It's like the "tigrityde" business - all those funny exaggerations [in Soyinka's parody of the Negritude writers].

I have a kind of fear of isolation. When I was in broadcasting I had two handles, so to speak. I wrote but I was not really cut off from people or events; and teaching, I thought, would be a similar thing. You meet students and others, and this is very useful. But I think I've come to a point where my time is very important to me; and perhaps I should find other contacts with people that won't be so consuming, so demanding.

No, anybody who wants to run away from that is simply doing it as his own peril. You must deal with it. And I think, with all respect, that Soyinka has never dealt with the colonial situation. Well, of course, he doesn't have to. But, in my view, anyway, it's the most important single thing that has happened to us, after the slave trade.

As far as I'm concerned the backward look into the origins of the malaise has been done. Now if one can go back even to pre-colonial times that is even better. We just don't have the expertise right now to do it, in my view, successfully. Ayl Kwele Ammah has attempted to do this in *Two Thousand Seasons*, and as far as I'm concerned this is a complete failure; I'm not convinced by it. It is fantasy, but there is a certain logic to fantasy and I don't accept this one. . . . but also it is hideously boring; the two facts may be linked.

Do I attach too much importance to the colonial experience? Too much attention to anything will divert you from other things. I don't think that's a justification for denying the truth. I think one has to be careful not to exaggerate. Exaggeration is part of our vocation, I think, but it still has to be kept in control. It's like the "tigrityde" business - all those funny exaggerations [in Soyinka's parody of the Negritude writers].

I have a kind of fear of isolation. When I was in broadcasting I had two handles, so to speak. I wrote but I was not really cut off from people or events; and teaching, I thought, would be a similar thing. You meet students and others, and this is very useful. But I think I've come to a point where my time is very important to me; and perhaps I should find other contacts with people that won't be so consuming, so demanding.

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The manipulation game

By Cyril Ehrlich

ROBERT H. BATES:
Markets and States in Tropical Africa
The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies
178pp. University of California Press. £19.50.
0 520 04253 0

Manipulating markets against the public interest is a universal sport: airline fares and car prices are familiar European examples. In tropical Africa the game is rougher. Governments are its leading exponents; peasant farmers, ie. most citizens, are their immediate victims; social and economic corrosion is the ultimate outcome. Agricultural economies now have to waste scarce foreign currency on imports of food. Export staples - cotton, coffee and cocoa - which once led economic growth are forced into decline. Nobody benefits, except for a privileged, rapacious few. Why, asks Robert H. Bates, "should reasonable men adopt public policies that have harmful consequences for the societies they govern?" Such euphemism is a momentary aberration in a book which generally avoids fashionable straitjackets of fact, and honestly attempts to anatomize "kleptocracy", a term not used by Bates, but singularly apt.

The trouble began with a muddled desire to regulate agriculture, both for its own good and to provide resources for industrialization which, it was assumed, would raise living standards. Machinery, procedures and mythology were handed down by colonial masters ignorant and distrustful of free markets. Long before African countries became independent there were measures to eliminate competition among buyers of produce, allegedly in the interest of those it most benefited, the peasant sellers. Monopoly and vested interest were supported, usually in the name of "rationalization" and "development". Marketing boards were established, paying prices well below market levels, in pursuit of undefined

and soon-forgotten "stabilization", their profits to be dissipated in bureaucratic excess, again called "development". In colonial days strict rules and administrative integrity. Subsequent modifications and depredation are described in the present book. Statistical tables show how much has been taken from farmers, and there are nice examples of how the money has been spent, notably in Ghana: the risible Esiama Oil Mill; the Cocoa Marketing Board's drink bill of one million cedi, between August 1977 and July 1978, to "boost the morale of the directors", and so forth.

But the author is more concerned with analysis than exposure. His schematic approach is illuminating, though it sacrifices any attempt at a coherent chronology. Nor, despite a good bibliography, does he always make adequate acknowledgment to his predecessors, particularly Peter Bauer, whose seminal writings on the economics of marketing reform and the politicization of African economic life span three decades, and were uniquely prescient. The pivot of Bates's argument is that agricultural policies are politically derived. While the approach to industry embodies a certain mad autonomy, achieving little but entrenched monopoly and inefficiency, agricultural policies are essentially devised to cope with the exigencies of urban politics. Cheap food must be procured for town workers (and, he might have added, for the army) if the next coup is to be averted. Foreign exchange rates are therefore manipulated, to lower the price of imported food; domestic food prices are controlled, and various projects launched. Little is accomplished. Attempts to regulate internal food markets, in contrast with export crops which can be easily mulcted, are inevitably thwarted by the farmer's natural resistance. The history of direct intervention is even more miserable, absorbing huge resources into state farms and the like, without benefit except to "the fortunate few who gain access to them". Fertilizers, seeds and credit are subsidized, ostensibly to encourage progressive farmers; but in practice

such resources are channelled to those whose support is politically useful or economically rewarding to the state. While governments therefore gain a few rural allies, the basic conflict between agrarian and rural interests remains "an inherent part of the development process".

Are these burdens upon agriculture best regarded as necessary costs of transition towards the pattern of industrial progress exemplified by, say, Singapore? Bates regards them as possibly necessary but certainly insufficient. Successful industrialization would require much else, including active exploitation of a large market. Only Nigeria offers possibilities in this direction, elsewhere current policies are less a prelude to growth than a framework for stagnation. Governments "get away with it" by coercion, and because urban retalliance through the market, doing official distributive channels, or growing alternative crops. Please at their resilience is tempered by the realization that they are being forced into costly second-best alternatives. Thus Tanzania's food crisis of the mid 1970s was probably caused by a potent mixture of drought, "villagization", and the fixing of prices at their equilibrium level.

The euphoria of independence has inevitably given way to "sullen cynicism". As open resistance is crushed, only minor adjustments to the prevailing political system are allowed. Bates attempts to end on a positive note by offering alternative "scenarios". These consist largely of projected coalitions between the various groups further juggling with change rates and, above all, real incentives for farmers. Any suggestion that governments might simply stop meddling is "naturally ignored by policymakers as hopelessly naive". Why? The performance of manifestly incompetent and unstable regimes might well be improved if they tried to do less, and laissez-faire is one of the few elixirs left in the visiting expert's dispensary. But "alternative futures" occupy only four pages of this serious, worthy book which is commendably free from the obscurantist jargon and conspiratorial ideology common to the genre.

Customary care

By Eva Gillies

ESTHER N. GOODY:
Parenthood and Social Reproduction
Fostering and Occupational Roles in West Africa
350pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
0 521 22721 6

A Ghanaian nine-year-old, fostered nearly all her life by an English professional family in Surrey while her own parents pursued their studies was, in 1972, consigned by an English judge to the care of her foster-parents until she reached the age of eighteen. The Ghanaian mother and father, themselves middle-class, were shocked and indignant: in their society, sending a child out to be fostered was (and is) a perfectly acceptable thing to do, not thought of as in any sense heartless or harmful to the child and in no way affecting the parents' rights.

Like other West Africans in London, they were simply adapting an old and widespread custom to their new circumstances. Among the Gons and Kpembes of northern Ghana, children are sent to provide company and household help to a mother's mother, mother's sister or father's sister; Dagomba chiefs' sons were traditionally brought up by titled chiefs; their daughters by the chiefs' wives; while commoners sent their own children to the chiefs' households to become his pages or his married wards. Muslims of many different tribes send their sons to live with a *mallam*, to serve him and

benefit by his religious instruction. In the economically and occupationally more differentiated Hausa and Kanuri kingdoms, the apprenticeship fostering of boys has long been widely practised, while girls are often sent to a childless secluded kinswoman to learn with the outside world. More modern types of apprenticeship in southern Nigeria and Ghana; traditional debt peonship among the Yoruba and other peoples; Creole wardship in Sierra Leone, these are only a few instances from an open set of similar phenomena. Each type of fosterage is, within its own social context, susceptible of a locally appropriate "functional" explanation. The puzzle is whether they can all be fitted into a single analytical framework.

The fact that Dr Goody has to a large extent achieved this is greatly to her credit; the more so as the ethnographic material she uses is as varied as the institutions it describes. Traditional Hausa society comes into close focus through the eyes of our old friend Baba of Kari; so, in a different way, do the Kpembe children studied by the author herself. Elsewhere, surveys, articles and monographs inevitably differ in scope, depth and style of presentation. Dr Goody dissects parental roles to yield an elegant diagram which can be interpreted in terms of transaction theory, and the comparison thus instituted are further related to the wider social, political and economic context. With these roles must be filled. Strong, unilineal descent groups, it seems, do not encourage fostering, where, in

the presence of centralized government, kin groups become looser and weaker, the exchange of children can work (like cross-cousin marriage elsewhere) to strengthen endangered ties; as society becomes economically and occupationally more differentiated, parental tuition may (especially for boys) no longer be adequate, and children are placed increasingly with unrelated foster-parents who can train them for new occupations and life-styles.

The neat transaction-theory model is here embedded in an argument whose whole intellectual style harks back to a much older conception of anthropology. Clearly, comparative studies are coming back into fashion. This is in itself an excellent thing, with so much good information now available, it is probably time to stand back a little from the detailed ethnographic work and try for a more general picture of a given institution, at least in a particular area, as is here done for child fostering in West Africa. But there is a danger this sort of comparison seems all too easily to arrange its terms along an unperceived time dimension. Dr Goody speaks of a "very long-term" progression from egalitarian segmentary societies through simple states to more complex hierarchical states based on trade and an elaborate division of labour, and of fosterage as being more or less "adaptive" in different circumstances. This seems no longer to be the language of transaction theory, but of Darwinian evolution. The whirligig of time brings in his revenges: is social evolution coming back into fashion too? If so, perhaps it should be made rather more explicit.

Flood and low water

By Roland Oliver

ROBERT W. HARMS:
River of Wealth, River of Sorrow
277pp. Yale University Press. £16.80.
0 300 02616 1

As any air traveller today can see, the West African forest is full of people, whereas that of the Congo basin is almost empty. The roads of southern West Africa lead from town to town, with apparently little but trees in between, but the view from overhead shows how much of the total area has in fact been cleared for agriculture, and how many quite large settlements are concealed behind thin screens of forest verdure. In contrast, the waterways of the Congo system can show in places an almost continuous succession of riverside villages which are seen from the air to have only vast expanses of uncleared forest behind them. The modern country of Zaïre, formerly the Belgian Congo, consists in fact of a very lightly inhabited central basin, with most of the population grouped around the rim. Within the basin, the people live mostly beside the rivers, and their livelihood comes mostly from fishing. Until the advent of the river steamer, however, the fishermen were also the carriers and traders, and some of them operated over surprisingly long stretches of the inland waterway system.

Robert Harms's book is about the riverside people called the Bobangi, who live some five to six hundred miles up the Congo, between the confluences with its two largest tributaries, the Ubangi descending from the north and the Kasai from the south-east. This is a particularly strategic situation for river communications, commanding the only stretch of waterway common to the main routes from north to south and west to east. It is

not surprising that, of all the forest peoples, the Bobangi should have become the great specialists of the long-distance trade of the river. Harms, an academic historian from Wisconsin and more recently from Yale, lived among the Bobangi for nearly two years, making his base at Bobolo, and travelling from settlement to settlement in his own thirty-foot, mahogany dug-out canoe. His main concession to modernity was a six-horsepower outboard motor, which saved him the services of ten to twenty paddlers. Owing to the strained political relations between Zaïre and the Congo Republic, his travels were confined to the Zaïre side of the *thalweg*, but most of his informants knew both sides of the river and certainly his accompanying archival researches covered French as well as Belgian colonial records, and those of the Spiritan missionaries of the Congo Republic as well as those of the Baptists of Zaïre.

Fishing is often considered to be a sedentary occupation, but on this stretch of river it follows a seasonal mobility akin to pastoral transhumance. The Congo and the Ubangi between them make two periods of flood and two intervening periods of low water. The fish and the fishermen dispose themselves accordingly. At low water the fishermen leave the villages and camp on sandbanks and islands which are submerged during the flood. With the rising flood, fish move in to feed on the submerged vegetation of banks and islands exposed during the dry season. At high flood the island and shoreline camps must be abandoned and the fishermen return to the permanent villages situated on bluffs of high ground, to live on the dried proceeds of their catch and to trade the surplus for root-crops grown away from the river banks in forest clearings. The fishing way of life thus provided the perfect training for the long-distance river trade of pre-colonial times. Trading parties differed from fishing parties

in that they travelled further afield, and in larger numbers for reasons of security. They built temporary camps as relay stations, and fished as they went. Fishing canoes were enlarged to provide additional carrying capacity, and the number of paddlers was increased for speed and defence. Above all, the network of human contacts was expanded by blood brotherhood and inter-tribal marriage, so that trading journeys could be extended far beyond the range of purely fishing expeditions. At the high period of this system, from the late eighteenth until the late nineteenth century, Bobangi traders were active from the northern margins of the forest around modern Bangui to the Stanley Pool (now Lake Malebo), whence land routes led through the edges of the southern savanna to the Congo estuary, avoiding the cataract region of the lower river.

Among the commodities of the long-distance canoe traffic Harms concentrates, probably excessively, on slaves and ivory. He thus presents the commercial development of the Bobangi almost entirely as a response to the stimulus of the European sea-borne trade of the Atlantic coast. He sees it beginning during the early sixteenth century, when the Portuguese were trading actively through the kingdom of Kongo, with slave markets situated on the shores of the Stanley Pool. He sees it growing substantially during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in response to the Dutch development of the slave trade from the Loango coast, north of the Congo estuary. He sees the export trade in slaves passing its peak during the early nineteenth century and thereafter being replaced by the ivory trade, thanks to which the Bobangi were able still further to increase their wealth and power until the river steamers and the commercial monopoly of the Congo Independent State put them suddenly out of business in the 1890s.

In fact, this all seems an unnecessarily Eurocentric interpretation, especially from an author who has been to such pains to collect the traditions of the Bobangi themselves. It is in every way more likely that long-distance trade on the lower Ubangi originated in the exchange of foodstuffs between the forest region and the northern savanna - stockfish for yams, and palm-oil for millet beer - and that it increased with the internal trade in minerals, particularly the red copper of Mindouli, to the west of the Stanley Pool, which was probably being mined and traded long before the Portuguese reached the Congo estuary. Again, it is almost certain that an internal trade in slaves from the savanna to the forest would have long preceded the export of slaves by the Bobangi to the Atlantic markets. Just as land caravans needed porters, so canoe transport needed paddlers, and Harms's book is full of evidence that forest populations were not prolific. Wherever in pre-colonial Africa an ethnic group engaged heavily in the carrying trade, the agricultural and domestic labour so lost had to be replaced by slaves. And Bobangi had plenty of nasty, dirty jobs, like building up river banks and spreading alluvial deposits, which were considered more suitable for slaves than for solid citizens.

From such beginnings, the Bobangi were well placed to respond to the stimulus of intercontinental trade when that came their way. The number of slaves sold at the Loango coast reached three thousand a year during the later seventeenth century and six thousand by the end of the eighteenth. It is thought that perhaps ten thousand of these slaves had been brought down the northern tributaries of the Congo by the Bobangi. If this is so, about fifty large canoes would have been needed, each manned by a crew of fifty to sixty men, who would be absent from home for three to five months on each expedition. The canoes

would carry other merchandise, but slaves had to be fed both on the voyage and while awaiting resale. For an ethnic group numbering perhaps thirty or forty thousand in all to handle as middlemen a thousand slaves a year would have been a considerable effort, and one which could only have been achieved by a process of slow increase, involving a substantial transformation of the Bobangi society as a whole.

As Harms shows very clearly from his evidence obtained by interview, the first consequence of becoming a slave-trading society was the need to absorb still more slaves into the home population. The successful entrepreneur among the Bobangi was the proprietor of one or more large canoes (each the product of nine months' specialized labour) who also numbered among his household enough trusted slaves to provide half the crew. The remaining half could be found among poor relations, who would wield a paddle in exchange for a certain amount of cargo space for their own petty commercial ventures. The trusted slave acquired status through being offered some of the privileges of free men, and through the prospect of obtaining more by the willing exercise of energy and intelligence. The less trusted slave was left to perform the dirtier chores of the home village, with the prospect of being literally sold down the river if he failed to give satisfaction. The lineage system of the old fishing society had thus been transformed into a collection of family firms or "houses" similar to those of the lagoons and waterways around the Bight of Benin. It was a situation in which half of those who spoke Bobangi were not so in any genetic sense, and in which the important marriages were those which cemented the alliances between Bobangi and non-Bobangi commercial houses up and down the river.

In the 1840s slaves gradually

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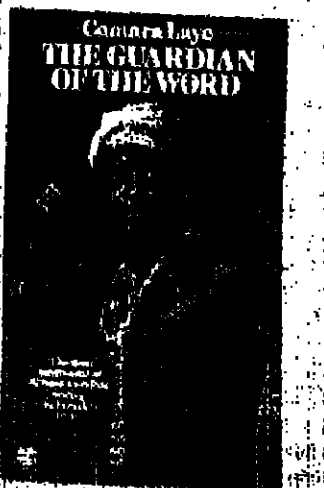
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ceased to be exportable across the Atlantic and their price fell drastically. Very likely, this was the real turning point in the social history of the Bobangi and the other riverine tribes of the central Congo basin. The supply of surplus slaves for export had been steadily increasing for two hundred years, and it did not suddenly cease when the bottom dropped out of the market. The imports from the outside world to which the Bobangi had become accustomed - textiles, metal bars and manufactured hardware - could still be maintained by switching from the export of slaves to that of ivory, which the price rose steadily through the middle years of the nineteenth century. This drew in a new set of primary producers in the shape of the pygmy hunters of the watershed

Territorial imperative

By Michael Crowder

JEREMY WHITE:
Central Administration in Nigeria, 1914-1948
The Problem of Polarity
Foreword by Adebayo Adedeji
36pp. Frank Cass/Dublin: Irish Academic Press, £17.50.
0 7146 3184 1 (Frank Cass)
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OYELEYE OYEDIRAN (Editor):
The Nigerian 1979 Elections
195pp. Macmillan. £15 (paperback, 25.95).
0 333 31785 8

When Sylvia Leith-Ross sailed out to Nigeria with her husband on the Elder Dempster mailboat in 1907, she found that the purser never placed officials travelling to Northern Nigeria at the same table as those going to Southern Nigeria. As the wife of a "northerner", she recalled, "we somehow took it for granted that all Southern officials were rather fat, rather flabby and that they started drinking at six o'clock while we never started before six-thirty."

In 1912 Sir Frederick Lugard, conqueror and High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria from 1906 to 1912, was given the task of amalgamating it with the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. The two Nigerias were finally joined as the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria on January 1, 1914. But the boundary between the Northern and Southern Provinces, as the former protectorates were now known, remained as rigid under Lugard's scheme of amalgamation as it had appeared to Sylvia Leith-Ross. It was a boundary that was to prove the major stumbling block to the creation of a united Nigeria for the next half-century. When finally it was abolished in 1967 with the division of Nigeria into twelve states, the damage had been done: independent Nigeria was plunged into a civil war in which the antagonisms engendered through the British division of the colony were an important factor.

Would that civil war have taken place, asks Jeremy White, in this admirable study, had the British divided up the country differently in 1914? Certainly, alternative plans for the organization of Nigeria into four or more regions were put forward, which Lugard was considering the amalgamation. And the focus of White's carefully researched and balanced volume is the successful resistance between 1914 and 1944 by the British "northerners" to all attempts by Lugard's successors to make his amalgamation more than nominal. As far as Lugard was concerned amalgamation had meant the imposition of the system of indirect rule as developed in Northern Nigeria on the southern provinces and with it the concomitant of direct taxation. Apart from rationalizing the communications of the country and introducing a uniform legal system, the territories and their tributary provinces to retain a great deal of autonomy. He had, as Governor, appointed a secretary in Nigeria, and he had, as High Commissioner, taken office. It was he who paved the way

central Treasury and a Posts and Telegraphs Department.

Sir Hugh Clifford, his successor, immediately set about strengthening the central government. He upgraded the central departments, and restored the Legislative Council that Lugard had abolished in the south on amalgamation. But the new Legislative Council still had competence only for Lagos and the southern provinces. The establishment of a strong central secretariat with a Chief Secretary in charge led to a running battle between Lagos and Kaduna, the seat of the Northern Lieutenant-Governor, that was to continue until the 1950s. The establishment of technical departments over whose officers the Northern Lieutenant-Governor had no direct control caused Sir Hugh Clifford to appoint a Secretary for Native Affairs to oversee native administration in the country, but though he had arrived in Nigeria suspicious of the philosophy of "northern" indirect rule he left accepting it. And he did not insist on a central list of administrators for the country, in which "northerners" would serve in the south and vice versa.

Nevertheless each successive administrator of the Northern Provinces saw it as his task to defend them against the possibility of the imposition of Crown Colony government with its corollary of a Legislative Council. If self-government were ever to come to the north it would be on the basis of the "native states" or Muslim emirates, not on suffrage, however limited. The lieutenant-governors and their fellow British "northerners" were suspicious and usually downright contemptuous of educated southerners, and were determined to keep Christian missionaries out of their domain. The result was an educational imbalance in Nigeria: Christian missionaries provided most of the educational facilities in the south, and that meant that in 1938 the larger north had only 20,632 children in western-type schools as against 253,546 in the south. In their self-appointed task of protecting the north from "contamination" White shows that there were few lengths to which the "northerners" were not prepared to go, and their ruthlessness in their pursuit of this goal is exemplified by Sir Richmond Palmer, Lieutenant-Governor from 1925 to 1930, to whom he appropriately devotes a whole chapter.

It is difficult to decide, on the evidence White presents, whether Palmer or T. S. Adams, who became Chief Commissioner in 1937 - Sir Donald Cameron as Governor had downgraded the title of the Lieutenant-Governor in what proved an unsuccessful attempt to assert central authority - did more harm to the cause of eventual Nigerian unity by their insistence on isolating the north from the south. Appointed from Malaya, Palmer treated the emirate states rather than heads of local governments. He even demanded that there be a separate budget for the north. It was a tragedy for Nigeria, White insists, that Adams was appointed to the north just when a development-conscious governor, Sir Bernard Bourdillon, who was neither a "northerner" nor a "southerner", took office. It was he who paved the way

French Congo. While human sacrifices at the funerals of chiefs and rich men had probably been an ancient feature of Bobangi society, as of so many others in this part of Africa, it was almost certainly during this period, when slaves were cheap and numerous, and when traders were turning into warlords, that funeral sacrifices reached the dimensions which so scandalized the Baptist missionaries of the 1880s that even King Leopold's regime appeared to them by comparison a merciful release.

Robert Harms has written a very remarkable book, and one which someone who knew almost nothing about pre-colonial Africa would find readable and absorbing. If it causes any hesitation to the professional historian, it will be on account of its weakness in chronological evidence.

for the constitution introduced by Sir Arthur Richards in 1944 that first brought north and south together in one legislature. But though the south was divided into east and west in 1939, the north remained intact despite the fact that once again suggestions for its division had been put forward. And the federation of Nigeria that became independent in 1960 was based on this tripartite division in which the Northern Region was both in area and population larger than the other two together. It was a recipe for disaster, whose making Jeremy White analyses skilfully. As a former administrative officer in the north, John Smith, admitted in 1968, the "strong regional loyalty of the expatriate civil service may perhaps have helped to institutionalize the sad relations between Nigerians in North and South."

Today, with Nigeria divided into nineteen states since 1976, the distinction between north and south has faded. How far this is so was put to the test at the Federal Elections of

The documented history of the West Central African coast does not tend deep enough into the interior to make a clear fit with the traditional history of the Bobangi at any period earlier than the late eighteenth century. The Bobangi themselves preserve no deep genealogical evidence around which to articulate the memories of the past. Essentially, the Harms's fieldwork provided information about the state of affairs on the coast of the colonial period, from more than a fairly convincing model of the course of development during the past five centuries. All the same, it is a model well worth the study, and one that should be considered in connection with other riverine communities, such as those of the Niger drainage system.

1979 that marked the end of thirteen years of military rule. The politically monolithic north is no more, as *The Nigerian 1979 Elections*, edited by Oyeleye Oyediran, clearly shows. The NPN, the party which inherited the mantle of the Northern Peoples Congress, that had dominated the old Northern Region, controls the executives of only five of the ten states carved out of it. Of the five parties qualified to contest the election four gained control of one or more state executive in the former Northern Region while one party alone gained all four state executives in the former Western Region. Of the three former regions, Oyediran shows that it was among the voters of the north that the factor of ethnicity in voting behaviour was lowest. And with the probability that Nigeria will be divided into even more states there is hope that the boundary between north and south entrenched by Lugard will be psychologically and cartographically a thing of the past.

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The growth of African publishing

By Peter Warwick

According to traditional Yoruba belief, Ife-Ife is the original home of mankind. In the beginning it was the hunting ground of the gods who descended to it from the sky by a spider's web. Oludumare, the Supreme Being, conceived of the idea of transforming its marshy wasteland into solid earth and summoned Orisa-nla, the arch-divinity, to accomplish the task with a snail-shell filled with loose earth, a five-toed hen and a pigeon. Orisa-nla threw down the soil which was scattered and spread by the hen and the pigeon. Oludumare then sent a chameleon to inspect that the work had been done. Later, trees were planted and the earth was peopled by an initial group of sixteen human beings.

It is at this place, Ife-Ife, in western Nigeria, that the seventh life international Book Fair opens on March 1, to become not only a meeting place for African and international publishers, but also a shop window for Nigeria's own publishing industry. In the words of Olayi Bolodeoku of the Nigerian Publishers Association, it is a gathering that serves "to assert an African identity in the world of books".

Africa's association with the world of literature and learning goes back many centuries, long before the first Europeans reached the continent's sub-Saharan shores. Ethiopia produced written works in its own language even before the earliest literatures appeared in western Europe, in Celtic and Germanic languages. Timbuktu, in present-day Mali, was a prosperous commercial and cultural centre in the fifteenth century; its Sankore mosque served as a gathering place for Muslim scholars and writers, fulfilling a role equivalent to the universities of medieval Europe. Along the eastern coast of the continent Swahili narrative poetry dates back to the early eighteenth century.

Among the first African authors to

be published in Europe were three West Africans who had been enslaved and later managed to travel to England as servants. Ignatius Sancho's *Letters* were first published in 1782, two years after his death. Born on a slave ship and baptized in Cartagena, Sancho served as a butler in the Duchess of Montagu's household and later opened a grocery's shop in Westminster. By 1803 his correspondence had been published in five editions. Ottobah Cugoana published an anti-slavery tract in 1787, partly autobiographical and partly propagandist. Olaudah Equiano was the most successful writer of the three. He was born in Igboiland in eastern Nigeria, and was sold into slavery at the age of twelve. His autobiography, written when he was in his early forties, was published in London in 1789, and by 1794 there had been eight English editions and one American.

In Southern Africa local printing presses were established by missionaries in the first half of the nineteenth century at Lovedale in the eastern Cape and at Morija in Lesotho. Xhosa writers were contributing to the missionary journal *Ikwezi* (The Morning Star) in the mid-1840s. Thomas Mofolo's first Sesotho novel was published at Morija in 1907; his best-known work, *Chaka*, an historical novel dealing with the early nineteenth-century Zulu revolution, was completed in 1910, and eventually published in 1925. Sol T. Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa*, a penetrating and moving indictment of the South African Land Act of 1913, was published in London in 1916; his historical novel, *Mhudi*, by the Lovedale Press in 1930.

Between 1850 and 1950 a tradition of writing, mainly though not exclusively in English and French, began to develop throughout the continent among members of the Western-educated and predominantly Christian

elite in African society. Writers and journalists of the time, working under conditions of alien political tutelage, showed concern in their publications for the pressing political and social questions of the day and also for recording and explaining their own indigenous culture. J. E. Casely Hayford's *Ethiopia Unbound* (1911), Mofolo's *Chaka*, Plaatje's *Mhudi* and R. E. Obeng's *Eighteenth-century* (1943) were among early examples of the African novel. Alongside these various written works, a vigorous tradition of oral literature, its roots deep in African society and culture.

The starting point of contemporary African literature in English is generally taken to be the publication by Faber in 1952 of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* by the Nigerian writer Amos Tutuola. In a major review in the *Observer*, Dylan Thomas found much to admire in its unconventional style, "terse and direct, wry, flat and savoury"; the book has never been widely acclaimed in Africa - one Ghanaian critic later remarked that "Tutuola possessed little more than a good imagination and bad grammar".

Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* was published by Heinemann in 1958, becoming the foundation stone in 1961 of the pioneering paperback African Writers Series, with Achebe as its first series editor. Something of a publishing gamble initially, the series has achieved considerable critical and commercial success and now runs to almost 250 titles. *Things Fall Apart* has sold over a million copies in its AWS edition, many of them for classroom use. The series has helped to draw the continent's immense untapped wealth of literary talent and brought the works of writers such as Achebe, Ngugi, Ousmane and Ekweni to a wide reading public throughout the world.

The African Writers Series, largely because of its enormous success, has

attracted a good measure of criticism, not least from some of its own authors. "A neocolonial writers' coffee owned by Europeans and slyly misnamed 'African'", Ayi Kwei Armah called it in 1978, though two of Armah's books have been published in the series since. Another consequence of its success, however, has been to give further encouragement to both international and indigenous publishers to promote African creative writing. Longman's new *Drumbeat* series, launched in 1979, is rapidly approaching publication of its fifteenth title. Though it still remains true, inevitably, that a Gambian poet, however talented, will find it more difficult to be accepted for publication than a Nigerian novelist, African writers today have more publishing opportunities than ever before.

Writers today also have a much larger and more heterogeneous potential readership in the continent as a result of population growth, the spread of literacy and extension of secondary and higher education. Writing for children has attracted the formidable talents of both Chinua Achebe and Buchi Emecheta, while a number of young writers have turned to popular and teenage fiction and to writing for television. Literature in Africa has never had an exclusively elitist connotation, though the growth of popular fiction modelled on Western lines has been viewed with misgivings by some, fearing the emergence of a potentially unbridgeable gap between books for classroom study and books for feather-light entertainment, between the established works of African literature and spicy, fast-moving crime and romance stories.

The contributions of African authors in academic and educational publishing have been impressive, ranging from the works on tropical medicine written in the nineteenth century by the Sierra Leonean physi-

cian, Dr James Africanus Horton, to the Ibadan History Series begun in 1965 under the editorship of Professor K. O. Dike and subsequently edited by the author of the first book in the series, Professor J. F. Ade Ajayi, to the UNESCO *General History of Africa*, the first two volumes of which were published a year ago. There is a strong tradition in the continent of imparting knowledge and making scholarship accessible to students and relevant to the community, a tradition that received timely recognition when last year's Noma Award, an annual book prize designed to encourage the publication in Africa of works by African authors, was awarded to Professor Felix Adi for his book *Health Education for the Community*, published by Nwamife in Nigeria.

Compared to twenty years ago, or even ten years ago, the growth of publishing in Africa is one of the most remarkable features of the publishing landscape today. In Africa there are now about 500 publishing houses and research institutes with publishing programmes. African publishers face immense problems that to many might seem collectively insuperable: the small per capita income and diversity of languages of most African countries; the need for large sums of high-risk and initially low-yielding investment capital to launch a publishing company; the undeveloped nature of the printing industry in Black Africa; stern competition, especially in the educational book market; and Africa's poor transport and communications infrastructure and relatively small number of established retail outlets which conspire to make effective book distribution an enormous challenge.

Yet, in spite of these difficulties, African publishing in recent years has grown rapidly within the continent, as well as outside it. The 1982 life Book Fair will no doubt attest to its continuing vitality.

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Handing on loneliness

By Anne Duchêne

BARBARA PYM:
Un Usuitable Attachment
256pp. Macmillan. £6.95.
0 333 32654 7

This posthumously published novel carries the sad responsibility for driving Barbara Pym into a fifteen-year silence. In 1963, when she was fifty, she sent it to Jonathan Cape, who had published her six previous novels, and it was turned down. (Turned down by letter, too, and fairly tersely, as unlikely to sell: a view which, as Philip Larkin says in his Foreword to the book, might have been more gently delivered over luncheon.) When two other publishers also rejected it, she retired wounded and bewildered until she was thawed out, as it were, in 1977, when Lord David Cecil and Philip Larkin, solicited by an enquiry in the TLS, both named her as the most underrated writer of this century. There was not time for her to produce much more, though, before her death in 1980; and the "few green leaves" of that period are nipped by a frost not found in her first brave comedies.

Mr Larkin loyally puts *An Unsuitable Attachment* alongside the earlier

novels because of its "undiminished high spirits", but he is cheating a little here. The "high spirits" of all Pym novels, after all, are applied to very acute studies in loneliness: a quite specialized form of loneliness, held stoutly at bay by all the stations of the Anglican calendar, and by all the small, determined pleasures of egocentric gentility. Presumably William Plomer and Daniel George, who read the novel for Cape and rejected it, did not do so because in the heady atmosphere of 1963 such charms seemed dowdy and outdated. Presumably they thought - as Mr Larkin also concedes - that the book lacked a central coherence, in that the two protagonists of its "unsuitable attachment" are its least vigorous and convincing components.

All the book's energy lies in its peripheral characters. The setting is a run-down part of London, only just emerging from gentrification. In it, the vicar's well-bred wife has to lavish all her love on her cat; the vicar is abstracted, inclined to open his sermons with "Those of you familiar with the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome", and only mildly surprised to find cat-hairs on his altar-cloth; they have to submit separately to the rigours of the church bazaar. There is also a chief librarian, the heroine's boss, who is fastidious about his midday sandwich-fillings and proposes marriage to her - decently deferrable, he im-

plies, until after his mother's death - because he covets her inherited Pembroke table and her Hepplewhite chairs; and a neutered anthropologist, whose name is Rupert Stonebird, and who feels constrained to marry but does not much care who comes first to hand.

Amid these established Pym archetypes, the two victims of the "unsuitable attachment" make little impact. John, the suitor, wearing shoes which "seemed to be a little too pointed", is only occasionally seen, wooing the heroine with unabashed clichés of the most embarrassing kind; he is common, one has to conclude, and almost too common even to be a cad. Ianthe, the heroine, a canon's daughter past her first youth who wears low-heeled, square-toed, discreet shoes and stockings with seams, is impeccable until she "lets love sweep over her like a kind of illness". If John is a vaguely noxious gas, Ianthe is an inert one.

Not a vintage Pym, then; rather, a corked one. The delicate despondencies which warmed *Excellent Women*, for example, are not present here; but fifteen years is a useful suspension for any writer, and the withdrawal of confidence which led to the ban on this book must have lost us many more pleasures than the book itself happens to provide.

Collectors' items

By Alan Hollinghurst

HAROLD ACTON:
The Soul's Gymnasium
And Other Stories
165pp. Hamish Hamilton. £7.95.
0 241 10740 7

Sir Harold Acton prefaces the prologue to these tales with a quotation from a Preface by Henry James: "It comes over me even as I write that the general air in which most of these particular flowers of fancy bloom is an air we have pretty well ceased to breathe." This, Acton claims, was written in 1922, a date by which James may be considered to have pretty well ceased to breathe himself. But that apart, the sentence draws attention to Acton's avowed purpose in working in the margin between memoir and fiction: to resuscitate for us a past that requires explanation.

Memoir and fiction, however, though they may nourish each other, none the less have different conventions and meanings. The memoir need no more than report old gossip, and this is presumably what society memoirs do; fiction seeks to do rather more. The slightly pathetic device of Acton's "Prologue" is an attempt to justify his stories not as independent fictional artefacts but as depictions of actual people he knew, whose disguises he can hardly bear not to pull away. He recalls: "How often, have I been asked: 'Why don't you write about them?' They would make an amusing novel." His answer was, that these characters from Florentine colonial society were "insufficiently interesting in themselves. The Jamesian lesson is that they don't have to be interesting in themselves at all, and the situation Acton describes here all merit, treatment, though the short story length adds to a sense of their insignificance. The situation from James inevitably emphasizes Acton's merely sketchy evocation of a vanished age, and the lack of moral nuance in the events recounted.

Acton's Florence is a milieu strangely devoid of value. He reveals that the city has "a unique cultural atmosphere", but this culture is not a means of enlightenment for its characters; quite the contrary: all his characters, unlike themselves, are in a state of self-deception. The typical progress is into increasing self-deceit,

rather than towards imaginative release or the understanding which Florence promotes in, for example, Forster's *A Room with a View* - a novel which also contains a satire on the English colony. Many of Acton's people are collectors, tinged with the destructive egoism of James's Gilbert Osmond, but handled more ambiguously, as representatives of a vanishing world of moneyed idleness. The treatment of wealth is certainly Jamesian - there is no intimation of where it comes from, or of any narrative that is "social" except in the narrowest sense - but the notion of the collection as an expression of a distinguished but moribund existence is strongly reminiscent of the later novels of L. P. Hartley, with their hoards, sales, legacies and violated privacies. The private collector, Acton mourns, "is a fish out of water in a socialist world." This dual attitude towards collectors, as self-obsessed yet estimable, precious in both senses, is typical of the stories' inclinations to both nostalgia and sarcasm. They describe a small and frivolous society which by its very extravagance at once both celebrates and condemns itself.

The most striking outcome of this quality is the very high incidence of deaths which are recorded with no feeling at all. The creatures we are asked to consider are not, it is finally suggested, worth weeping over; but the negative emphasis is not underpinned by any positive vision. The manner of narration, too, resists both penetrating sympathy and moral discernment: the passage of time is clearly essential to the stories, as to the "guy's" relationship with the material he draws from the city and the people he has known over a long life, but it blurs the focus on the stories which it shapes. Large sweeps of time are covered, World Wars intervene, and the narrative voice blandly takes them in its stride, referring to events rather than coming down on sharply defined scenes which would dramatize the issues as well as involving the reader.

By far the best story is "Fin de Race", which does achieve some complexity of motive and fixes its enquiry in vividly seen moments: a young American couple instal themselves in a disquieting villa to which the husband devotes all his energy, while the wife forms an (unconsummated) attachment to the son of a fallen aristocratic family, imagining she will be able to seduce him away from a young Sicilian orderly, forced by her husband to leave her com-

In rats' alley

By Andrew Motion

ROBERT McCrum:
A Loss of Heart
282pp. Hamish Hamilton. £7.95.
0 241 10705 9

On the first page of *A Loss of Heart* a rat falls and dies at Philip Taylor's feet as he is hurrying down the Charing Cross Road. On the last, Taylor himself is killed by a terrorist who flings him from the upper window of a besieged house. The two incidents make a crudely obvious pair of brackets around an otherwise subtle book, and over-expose themes which for the most part are handled elegantly and mysteriously. The two falls signify a shift from symbolic harassment to actual victimization, and the association of rats with scientific experiments introduces a question of choice and free will. Shortly before meeting his fate, Taylor tells his girlfriend: "I don't want to trace a way through the maze like a rat in a laboratory, and find myself running towards extinction." This fear is more than simply occasional or temperamental: McCrum's narrative attempts to make a connection between Taylor's dilemma and the problems which beset England in its post-imperial decline. Although McCrum's treatment of the actual decay of empire is rather sketchy, his exposition of anxieties at home is entirely convincing. Taylor is compellingly lonely, and the novel engrossingly depressing.

Philip Taylor's role as the representative of a whole country's uncertainty is highlighted by his immediate social background. He has been brought up as a Quaker, and his father is the last in a long line to have worked for the family firm - Mayhew and Taylor, Chemists, "The Family People". For generations, his forbears have compensated for their religious exclusion by enjoying commercial success, but by the 1980s the reasons for alienation have been reversed. Faith is no longer much of an issue, but the firm has been "outgunned" by the European and American giants, and links with the ancestral past are destroyed. In view of his stammer, myopia, broken marriage and unfulfilling job, it is hardly surprising that Philip should feel, when only just thirty, "completely attuned to the possibility of failure".

Philip's elder brother Daniel has

reacted more defiantly. After an adolescence spent in bitter arguments with his father, Daniel becomes a journalist and sets about wrecking the (already feeble) family business. When he has investigated its dealings in Africa he has exposed them as corrupt, ruins his father, and disappears from sight. By the time the novel opens not even his brother has been seen for years - but an unexpected phone call from Daniel's friend Stevie soon intermingles their lives once again. Partly because he fancies Stevie himself, and partly to shed light on his family, Philip allows himself to become curious about Daniel's missing years. When Daniel is found dead of a heart-attack, this interest becomes positively keen. Philip embarks on a quest for the recent, disruptive past, and in doing so becomes entangled in a violent present as well.

Initially he imagines that Stevie's loathing of continuing English imperialism, and her fear of the police are merely neurotic dreams. But his brief arrest under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and his detailed discovery of Daniel's disillusionment at home and abroad, rapidly change his mind. It is not just that these events strip him of "the modest anonymity [which] has always been a source of security"; they help to explain Daniel's impatience with talk and analysis. Only action, he understands, is an adequate response to certain predicaments.

But this realization is at odds with Philip's tendency to think too precisely on any event. His relationship with his father and estranged wife maintain their usual pattern of anxiety and bungling, and when he seeks enlightenment from an old family friend he is merely brought face to face with his own ineffectual gloom.

All his life he has been lonely, but he had never known loneliness like this. As a child, overshadowed by Daniel, he had learnt to play his own solitary games; in adolescence, when his brother's bank with his father was just beginning to hot up, he was often ignored. Introspection became his armour against the indifference of the world.

It is Stevie who deals with this defensive inwardness most liberatingly and woundingly. When Philip has traded her down to Daniel's old flat, his love for her gives him confidence, but her circumstances threaten him. She is acting as a contact for terrorists, and her cellar is full of explosives. When one of the terrorists bursts in with the police on his trail and takes Philip hostage, his personality crisis becomes acute. The step is the climax of his role as victim, but also exhausts his patience, with his earlier life. He admits to feeling "betrayed by the system" and to "believe in". If he were able to act, instead of being forced to crowd with his legs tied, terrified, the episode might provide him with the opportunity to break out of what he has previously condemned as the predictability of his own future.

The fact that Philip cannot act - not through weakness but by force of circumstances - is the measure of McCrum's proper, humane condemnation of violence. Philip's eventual death is simply pointless and cruel. But the route by which he reaches it forces him to consider the need for liberty, and the function of the outsider, more deeply than his previous experience has permitted. From his original frightened and narrow realization that he resented the freedom his wife had "discovered" at his expense, he comes to battle for autonomy, why Daniel and Stevie have alienated themselves from society, why Stevie herself is still living "in another state" and must finally fall him, and why his own boredom and loneliness are not merely things he has brought upon himself. In the last squalid hours before his death, he develops a painful, but revealing sense of his historical moment. He is a gentle, self-accusing renegade, earlier and more stable age, unwilling to retreat to its security, but unable to answer the demands for barbaric action that the present makes upon him.

John Mole

Irishness adapted

By Roy Foster

How Many Miles to Babylon?
BBC TV

We have been here before, to this particular province of Anglo-Ireland, and Jennifer Johnston has been our guide: the Big House, the slightly derisive villagers, the dangerous friendship across the social divide. In this case, however, the house is in its prime, the world is assured, the year is 1914; and the action is a prologue to the more apocalyptic confrontations of the Flanders front. The friendship between landlord's son and peasant boy survives their translation to the battlefield, where a mutual inability to conform to military logic condemns them both to a tragic end. Their association remains undivided as, it is hinted, could not have been the case if they had returned to Ireland and another, more intimate, war.

Jennifer Johnston's strengths are preserved in the characteristically skilful and subtle adaptation by Derek Mahon (who also dramatized the recent *Shadows on our Skin*). Indeed, those strengths are in themselves essentially theatrical: dialogue that uncannily loads mundane exchange with highly-charged implication, a talent for conveying both the idiom and the seriousness of childhood relationships, and an unsparringly economical eye which extracts the maximum essence from the minimum detail. Where there is weakness in the novels, it seems to come from a central lack of substance in the plot: all that style, all that accuracy, cannot succeed in concealing constructions which can sometimes be so laconic as to verge dangerously on the banal.

The interesting thing in this adaptation is how the medium effectively clarifies certain lacunae in the book. The novel leaves an unsatisfying uncertainty about the reason why Alexander's beautiful mother forces him to go off to war; on screen, the tension between the parents leaves little doubt that it is her final act in the oblique but terrible

war of attrition between them, and that the son's real offence is his attempt to come to a *rapprochement* with his father. ("We've all been too well trained in behaviour", says the latter, echoing the title of Molly Keane's recent black threnody to Anglo-Irishness and repression.)

Another theme strongly illuminated in the play which adds a valuable coherence is the oddness of being Irish: whether they are Protestants or Catholics, officers or men, they appear alienated, at odds, following in war and peace a different reality from their English counterparts.

Possibly this is the reason for Daniel Day-Lewis's decision to play Alexander with a strong, though middle-class, Irish accent, but this means that, in an otherwise sensitive performance, he does not convince as a son of the Big House. Siân Phillips, half savage and half fey, is notable as his chilling mother. When the action moves to the war, however, the triumph belongs to Barry Foster as Alexander's exasperated major. A part which could have been played with simple blimpish brutality retains the dimension so well conveyed in the novel - that of a sympathetic man trapped into infamy by a desperate and relentless logic. The impossibility of Irishness surfaces again in his attempts to make Alexander "face reality", though the dichotomy is made subtler by the attractive playing of David Gillman as Bennett, Alexander's fellow-officer, who contrives to be feckless but English, and who knows how far to go in breaking rules.

In a superbly mounted production, where the war scenes were framed to recall Paul Nash and even the Irish bank-notes were authentically pre-war, Moira Armstrong's direction sometimes set a disconcertingly slow pace; but the final execution scene is extremely moving. The musical score, by Geoffrey Burgon, of *Brideshead* and is as good as good. Though doubts might remain about a certain structural insufficiency, the period lavishness does not conceal the resilient core of book and play: an exact apprehension of certain ironies and verities, Irish and English, which time does little to change.

The painter-etcher's line

By Celina Fox

William Blake to David Hockney
A Private Collection of British Prints
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

By the 1920s, the enthusiasm for collecting prints had grown into a mania, with its own ritual rights of cataloguing, mounting and display. Encouraged by "mumbo-jumbo experts", as Nevinson dubbed them, advised in numerous publications and supported through clubs, the neophyte was given to understand that he had become part of a select brotherhood of connoisseurs. But with the dissolution of the market following the Wall Street Crash, suspicious "investments" suddenly became worthless bits of paper and few had the tenacity to maintain their faith.

British prints, in particular, have over the last fifty years enjoyed only a piecemeal reassessment. Robert Loder has been acquiring them for ten years and he hopes that the display of part of his collection (on show at the Ashmolean until March 28) will prove something of an eye-opener. Indeed, his proselytizing zeal leads him to make the somewhat startling statement that he knows of "no other tradition of print-making that has consistently produced imaginative work of such quality over two centuries". He does admit, however, that this tradition has had its dead ends. The painter-etchers who followed Haden and Legros, those extraordinarily over-embellished heroes of the 1920s Bone and Moëby, as well as Griggs and Brock-

hurst with their uncannily meticulous workmanship, all fail to move him.

Instead, one of the principles he has followed is to acquire sets which, he thinks, demonstrate the processes of reproduction most effectively. These include Nevinson's *Building Aircraft*, which displays his characteristic technique of scraping through the lithographic crayon to suggest, in this instance, the shiny aircraft wings and patchwork fields beneath. The smooth, clean engraved lines of David Jones's *The Rhine of the Ancient Mariner* contrast with the spluttery etchings to Hockney's *A Select Progress* which seem to be drawn with a broken nib. But although such series are highly prized, they can also reveal an inability to sustain the imaginative theme and all of these artists have produced better work in single prints.

Besides the exploration of illustrative themes, the exhibition indicates a number of ways of expressing the English landscape. The Norwich

A century exhibition based on the University of Sussex's archive of Virginia Woolf papers is currently being held at the University Library. On display is a collection of first editions of the novels and books of criticism called "The Early Years" contains photographs of the Stephen children, a memoir of the period of Vanessa Bell and biographies of some of the writings included in Jeanne Schulkind's *Moments of Being*. The exhibition contains much of Virginia Woolf's correspondence, letters from Leonard, Vanessa, William Plomer, Katherine Mansfield, C. S. Lewis, Eliot and from her readers including one from Agnes Smith, a working woman who wrote to Woolf, inferring that working women are of different play to the "daughters of educated men" and felt impelled to say so. Other material on show includes a display devoted to books about the novels, from Winifred Holtby's *Virginia Woolf* of 1932 to more recent critical works. The exhibition continued until April 7.

Mark Casserly

commentary

One man's sense of honour

By Richard Combs

Ragtime
Various cinemas

E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* had such a precise identity that one didn't immediately question its sense of purpose. It treated historical figures as though they were fictional characters and vice versa, creating a texture in which what was real seemed to become foreground (incisive portraits of J. P. Morgan, Henry Ford, Harry Houdini, etc.) and what was fictional (the emblematically named family of Father, Mother and Younger Brother) became background. In the end, of course, the two mingled, because the novelist never abandoned the duties of social historian - one remembers the journey of Tatch and his daughter out of their Lower East Side slum mainly for its description of the system of interurban electric railroads - and the biographer of men like Houdini and Morgan took the shrewdest novelistic liberties. The presiding irony might be that, rich or poor, blessed or cursed, real or imaginary, all the characters are levelled not so much by death as by the measured rhythms and equalizing economy of Doctorow's prose.

But just what, in the end, is the point of this extremely well-conducted tour of the first decade of America's twentieth century is another matter. The problem is historical derivation of what, more or less, becomes the central incident of the book: the victimization of black ragtime pianist Coalhouse Walker Junior by the men of the Emerald Isle volunteer fire station, and his private vendetta against society when he is unable to obtain legal redress for the damage done to his Model T Ford. Coalhouse, one suspects, is none other than Michael Kohlhaas, the sixteenth-century horse-dealer whose crusade for justice after the illegal detention of two of his horses by a Saxon junker almost led to civil war.

Doctorow's version seems to have been taken from Michael Kohlhaas,

the novella by Heinrich von Kleist, who embroidered the historical account with such incidents as Kohlhaas's wife being killed when she tries to petition the Elector of Saxony and is clubbed by a bodyguard. In *Ragtime*, a policeman's baton fells Coalhouse's fiancée when she attempts to approach the Vice-President on a whistle-stop tour. But Doctorow covers his traces well enough, and merges this timeless tale of how one man's sense of honour and justice turns him into an outlaw and a murderer with the more contemporary activities of anarchists and socialists, plutocrats and capitalists.

In Milos Forman's adaptation, however, Coalhouse's story has become much more prominent, in fact is made to bear the social documentary burden since the film has excluded people like Emma Goldman and J. P. Morgan as characters, and hence the political forces they represent. It has substituted an odd gallery of luminaries of its own - ranging from James Cagney to Norman Mailer - whose appearance in small parts is presumably meant to provide the same sort of thrill as finding Freud, Houdini, et al in the pages of a novel. It is not quite the same thing, although it does tie in with a self-conscious streak in *Ragtime* about movie processes themselves. This ranges from the humble sidewalk vendor of silhouettes who becomes a grandiose director of "photoplays" to the way in which the climactic siege of Coalhouse and his men is shot in such a way as to emphasize elements of lighting and staging. There is in this, perhaps, a stray reminder of Doctorow's theme about the emergence of the consumer society.

But Forman has gambled most on Coalhouse's story to carry the film, although his vendetta against fire chief Willie Conklin doesn't reveal much about the social polarities of their era, except in a very stereotypical way. It also leads to a noticeable switch of focus in the film, from the broad, multi-character fresco of the first half to this steadily more doomed tale of intolerance and injustice, leading up to the final set-piece in which Coalhouse and his men barricade themselves inside the

J. P. Morgan Library. But the siege is neither handled in an intrinsically interesting way nor is its liberal rhetoric much of an advance on 1950's protest films. Again, the derivation of the story is probably what is most inhibiting: when Coalhouse engages in debate with Booker T. Washington, the spokesman of the respectable black community, and is finally damned by him, the scene never breaks into contemporary relevance because its origin is Kohlhaas's debate with Martin Luther on the subject of forgiving one's enemies.

In emphasizing Coalhouse, Forman is perhaps doing no more than trying to impose the sense of purpose that never seems to come from within the novel. One suspects he is apprehensive about such a fragmented narrative, anyway, since his own talents for social observation, for the revealing minutiae of behaviour in *A Blonde in Love*, *The Fireman's Ball* and *Taking Off*, depend on a strong, simple core around which he can improvise to his heart's content. In a way, he was entirely the wrong director for *Ragtime*, since he plunges into scene after scene, holding up the flow of the movie to elaborate on the performances and frame some behavioural truth, where Doctorow skirts, picking out the pattern. He lingers over the exposition of how Coalhouse's illegitimate child is accepted into the household of Father (James Olson), Mother (Mary Steenburgen) and Younger Brother (Brad Dourif), or the dispute over Evelyn Nesbit (Elizabeth McGovern) that leads Harry K. Thaw to shoot architect Stanford White (Norman Mailer), in order to prove that he can live in the period, and then, through Coalhouse's story, that he has understood it. But as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* indicated, Forman is not a social philosopher, and the film is finally a series of quite handsome demonstrations of a theorem that was one worth proving in the first place.

Speakers at the one-day conference "Black Writers in Britain", which will take place at the Commonwealth Institute on March 6, include Mustapha Matura, Buchi Emecheta and Sebastian Clarke.

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Edited by P. W. Hauxley

This monumental three-volume work provides a detailed biographical dictionary of Members of the House of Commons during the reign of Elizabeth I. It examines Members' backgrounds and their relationships with their constituencies, together with the development of the committee system in Parliament, the role of the Marian exiles in the Commons, and the statistical background to each of the ten Parliaments of the period. A magnificent work of reference for historians.

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Ray Desai

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The Transfer of Power in India 1942-47. Vol. X

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Formulation of A Plan, 22 March - 30 May 1947

Edited by Nicholas Mansergh and Fendel Moon

The first of three volumes on the Mountbatten Viceroyalty provides, for the first time, a documentary account of how the last Viceroy shaped and re-shaped a plan for a final handover of power. Much of the evidence (taken from the India Office Records and the Mountbatten Papers) has never before been published, and it sheds new light on the events, personalities and controversies surrounding the last momentous days of the Raj.

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remainders

BY ERIC KORN

Good Ramus pardon me, for I
Have always loved Trichotomy
But now I do affect it more.
By far, than ever I did before.
How many doe I daily see
Given up to Mulebrity!
A female head to a male face
Is married now in every place.
And some doe make, so vain they
are,
A Galaxias in their hair.
Now sure Trichotomy it is
Can banish these sad vanities

A.M.

A bookseller's lot (Lot 727 in this case) is not always an unhappy one. I have been getting a heap of quick pleasure from *Comarum* (Lewy), the *Loathsome* of LONG HAIRE or, a treatise Wherein you have the Question stated, many Arguments against it produc'd, and the most material Arguments for it refell'd and answered with the concurrent judgement of divines both old and new.

It was published in 1654 by Thomas Hall (1610-1665), Presbyterian and pamphleteer, curate of King's Norton, Worcestershire, and Master of the school there, ejected 1662, scholar, busybody. It is a vigorous piece, written in a tone of genial exasperation ("the Lord he knows that I do it not out of any Pharisaicall selfconceited humour"), though it gets a lot less genial in the second part. An Appendix... *Agonist Painting, Spots, nak'd Backs, Breasts, Arms &c. together with a discovery of the Nakedness Madness, and Folly of the Admirers of our times, a Refutation of all their Cavills, and removing of all the Filgrees, under which they would hide themselves.* He gets hot below the bands about those "impudent fly-blow kind of anabaptists" and is altogether down on "that which is the Bedlams madness, and the Beggars misery, viz Nakedness, that is the Whores pride, and the Strumpets glory".

It's all much as you would expect, but then my eye was caught by those commendatory verses signed A. M. Every bookseller wants his oil-polluted geese to be black swans, many an arithmetic book with "best wishes from Uncle Al" gets "possible Einstein presentation" pencilled onto the flyleaf, and I would clearly like these verses to be by Andrew Marvell ("Previously unattributed. Not in Margoliouth or Grosart. Of the highest rarity and importance in casting light on a previously obscure period of Marvell's life and on the development of his verse. £5 million o.n.o."). Well, they aren't in Margoliouth or Grosart, or in Crum, or in *Hobbed Pegasus*, and they have the right sort of sound to my unimpaired ear. In 1654 Marvell was alive, and well and writing in Eton, at the house of John Oxenbridge, having just left off tutoring Lord Fairfax's daughter in Yorkshire and failed to get a job with Milton. He became familiar here with John Hales ("the ever-memorable"). Could there be a connection through the schoolmasterly world with the Master of King's Norton Grammar School?

I have done a certain amount of research, laborious, delightful, and much of it no doubt misdirected, like looking through a century of indexes to *Noies and Quieres* to see if anyone there has preceded me. Apparently not, though J. E. Vaughan was working on a life of Hall in 1960, from the MS biography, but all that seems to have appeared in his *Guide Book to the Church and School of King's Norton* no clue there to G.A. who also contributed verses to the volume. (I've since consulted the MS in the Dr. Williams' Library. It doesn't help.) But Hall was married, bookish (his library went to Birmingham) and received pupils from far and wide.

He looked through Lewy for the *Loathsome* of LONG HAIRE, and I have found it. It was by Andrew Marvell, died in 1677. Andrew

Moore, *History of the Turks* 1660, four volumes, he wouldn't have had the time: Alexander More, who quarrelled with Milton, author of *Fides Publica Contra Calumnias J. Miltoni* and supposed author of *Regii Sanguinis Clamor*, and *Coelum*, actually by Peter du Moulin who let more about her; Andrew Mure, the credit later: Alexander Mudie, author of *Scotiae Indulgentiae*, A. Muremur (London), that's a pseudonym; Ann Moore, the pretended fasting woman of Tetsbury, 1813, irrelevant but I must find out more about her; Andrew Mure *The discovery of St Peter's Well*, From Wing's STC I and Adam Miles, *The Countryman's Friend*; Alexander Mingzeis, *Mirrh for Citizens*; and Adam Moore, *Bread for the Poor*. This last is probably irrelevant but I must add him to my collection of rhyming authors and titles, which I may have mentioned (*Omphalos* by P. H. Gosse, *Appointment in Samarra* by John O'Hara, *The Ill-Made Knight* by T. H. White: I have about a score from Johannes Freke, *De Linguae Graecae*, to René Levesque, *L'avenir de Québec*, and will give a bottle of fairly good claret, from Freddie Barrett; for the longest list to reach me by March 22).

From DNB I get, as well as a fractured eye-muscle and a parcel of rowdy Highlanders, more about Moore, a churchy character, though he did publish poems, albeit in Latin and in Paris. "Unless grossly calumniated throughout his public career, his morals must have been far less strict than his theology." Also, much more disturbingly, Adam Marindale, a Presbyterian divine from Cheshire, who wrote on everything, on natural salt from Cheshire, *Divinity Quota Unbound*, *Improvement of Mossie Land by Burnings*, *Twelve Problems in Compound Interest*, *An antidote to the Poison of the Times*, *A Token for Ship-boys*. When a maypole was put up in the village his wife "whipped it down in the night with a framing-saw". They don't make kill-joys like that these days.

I examined Guffy's *Concordance to Marvell* and derived little comfort from that. Marvell uses none of the obscure words in this piece, though he does use "affect", "pardon me", "dally", and of course "I", "they", and "is". He uses "vain" forty times, but only once or twice in the sense of "conceited" rather than "fruitless". He does use "in every place", in the sense of "everywhere" (whilst fame in every place, her trumpet blows). But I do not expect much from computers; my own computer assures me that the lines can't be by Marvell since they do not contain the word which heads his relative frequency table, "the". By the same token, they cannot be by any other English poet, either.

The volume also contains a longer and more entertaining set of verses "To the Long-haired Gallants of these Times", which is signed R. B., and has a striking passage on *Plica Polonica* or Polish plait:

Have you not been taken o'th' head
Of God on Poland lately laid?
Enough to make all Lands afraid,
And your long dangles stand an end?
Fare him that did that Plica send,
And those sad Curles, and hath more
Unheard of Judgements still in store.

There is a long side-note about *Plica polonica*, "A most loathsome and horrible disease in the hair, unheard of in former times; bred by moderate luxury and excess. It seizes specially upon women; and by reason of its viscid, venomous humour, glues together (as it were) the hairs of the head with a prodigious ugly-implication, and Intanglement, sometimes taking the form of a great snake, sometimes of many little serpents, full of nastiness, vermin, and noy some small".

There are all too many R. B.'s. Richard Broughton, author of *Monarchical Britannica*; Richard Baxter (*The Saint's Everlasting Rest* and three score more besides).

Richard Brome, the playwright; Robert Brathwaite, author of *The English Gentleman* (but he is a Royalist and surely out of consideration); Robert Democritus Burton - no, he died in 1640, I, of course, would like it to be Brome, editor (according to some authorities) of *Lachrymae Musarum*... *Elegies written by Divers Persons of Nobility and Worth upon the Death of Henry, Lord Hastings*, 1650, to which Marvell contributed one of the very few poems that was published in his lifetime. Brome died in 1652 or 1653, which doesn't exclude him entirely. It could just as well be Richard Baxter, who wrote approvingly of Thomas Hall (in *Reliquiae Baxterianae*), but Baxter lists all the books for which he wrote poetical epistles - or at least all he can remember: there is a mention of "one or two others" - and doesn't refer to it there or in his commendation of Hall.

If Brome, then Marvell; if Baxter then Marindale; or two other people entirely. But before leaving it to the experts, I looked up some of the odd words in the poems in OED, and this has confounded me entirely. "Mulebrity" is recorded from Kyd (1592) and Urrubarriz's *Rabalais* (1635). The uncommon form "galaxias" is reported only from Ussher (1625). So far so good. "Plica" is not recorded from before 1684 - must remember to send them a postcard when it is used by Robert Boyle. Boyle was around in 1650, and not too far from Worcestershire) but surely he is a red herring. "RB", in the note on plica, cites his authority as Dr Bolton, who turns out to be a Robert Bolton. He died in 1631; his patron was one Richard Brett. I don't think I can stand it.

"Trichotomy" as a logical term is commonly used, but "trichotomy" as a joke for hair-cutting is recorded by OED only from 1875, when it was used (hair is now beginning to crawl on the back of the neck in plica fashion) by Richard Burton, Richard Francis Burton that was.

Did you know that Robert Boyle and Richard Baxter had the same executor? Did you know that Peter du Moulin, or Petrus Molinaeus, son of Pierre du Moulin, or Petrus Molinaeus, (a pair of conspirators if I ever heard of any), wrote eulogies of both Robert Boyle and Roger Boyle? Have stumbled on a secret society of R. B.'s extending from the 17th century to the 19th century, an arboreal forest of unacknowledged arbiters (R. B. traitors), pointed arboreal-like at the heart of civilization, involving Robert Bridges and Rupert Brooke (alive in Grantham under an alias) and Rhoda Broughton and Richard Boston and Rabble Burns and Rabbi Bar-Jeshush, first King of Merovingia? Is Elizabeth Taylor aware of the fact that her ex-husband is the noted Victorian traveller and pornographer, and also the 300-year-old encyclopedist (what? he got to be melancholy about it)? And Rhet Butler and Ret B. Travenant and if I'm found suddenly dead (poisoned by Rubidium in my rum-baba), let England know.

I always thought Ephemeria was just a flash in the pan, especially since my all-too-successful attempt to corner the market on *Ephemeris* books ("My Dad sold them for less in 1941", complained - one non-client), but a new publication, *Ephemeris of Travel and Transport* (by Janice Anderson and Edmund Swinglehurst; 96pp; New Cavendish Books £7.95; 0 904568 27 X), convinces me that ephemeras are here to stay. And not just the bus-tickets we all collected at school (you remember, you could sell them for a pound, an eccentric rich collector if the numbers added up to 21; but I never found him) but anything from Duke of Wellington's servant's advertisements for cycle cobs and a Cooke's coupon - "Please provide the holder with one sedan chair from Nankow to the Ming Tombs".

And from Antwerp (where in

But one of the oddest pieces of Travel Ephemeria - in fact one of the strangest artefacts I've ever encountered - appears to be part of Trans World Airlines' answer to the economic crisis. It was a sturdy, well-produced paper bag, obviously the work of a craftsman, and it nestled between the airline magazine, full of soothing extracts from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and Erica Jong, and the laminated card that tells you how to distinguish between an emergency exit and a lavatory when in a state of panic.

The bag bore the TWA logo and below this, unexpectedly, a set of little boxes for filling in gin rummy scores. At least it said GIN RUMMY along the top, but this might be a clumsy neologism for an alcoholic who specialized. On the other side, however, it suggests that you mail your film in this bag to various addresses in New York, Chicago, and Dallas. "Save on color prints", they say.

So far so good. While away the tedium of the flight by playing gin rummy with strangers, but take mugs of them (if you call the steward she will adjust your reading light to give a brilliant photo-flood effect) in case their money turns out to be counterfeit. But there is another side to the bag. Along the closure it says: "For motion sickness relief by folding toward you and call cabin attendant for disposal".

Cards, cameras, nausea: we need some guidance as to the correct order in which these pastimes should be undertaken; but the only guidance we get from this polymorph package is the inscription along the base: "Attn US Customs; Exposed Film for Developing. Please Inspect Carefully." The US Customs certainly don't need to be told to scrutinize things carefully, so I assume the message is euphemistic for "Dear Customs Officer, this package may contain exposed film of international skyway criminals; on the other hand it may contain discarded gastric material; yet again it may contain nothing but gin rummy scores. Such is the penalty of adaptability. For your own protection, please examine gingerly."

It seems a shame that they haven't filled the remaining space on the bag with suitable maxims or further suggestions as to its use; but over centuries, your feet to protect your shoes should the aircraft begin to ship water in a rainstorm, pop it vigorously to cure hiccoughs, three simple tunes for the kids to play while waiting for the air-sea rescue. . . . Or perhaps a few quotations appropriate to gin ("Gin by pailfuls, wine in rivers, dash the windowglass to shivers", pious advice from Sir Walter Scott at 35,000 feet), photography ("The camera relieves us of the burden of memory" (John Berger), or H. G. Wells on rum ("I expect", he said "I was thinking just what a Rum Go everything is. I expect it was something like that").

On discovering the cost of mailing to The Hague a small parcel of the works of Amy Levy, I set out directly to deliver it to her, pausing only to reflect that Amy Levy, an unhappy Victorian poet - there is a reader who hits me with a piece of wood when I write "poetess" - could best be described as a proto-Plath, if that didn't sound too much like the kind of thing a lipping mad scientist might concoct.

I set out, not very directly, and the next morning saw me queuing among astonishingly circumspect Flemish schoolboys to gawp at the endless booky riches of Antwerp's Plantin-Moretus Museum, where seventeenth-century pages stand in type on seventeenth-century presses, for all the world as if awaiting a telegram from Frankfurt: "Ten thousand copies. De senectute sold to Florida geriatric nunn commence re-print speediest".

And from Antwerp (where in

identally, they publish a magazine for doglovers called *WOEF* to Amsterdam, which has still the feeling of emptying the ashtrays and putting back the furniture after that long, long, come-as-you-aren't party called The Sixties. Some of the guests haven't heard the party is over, and around the twin bastions of the alternative culture, The Paradise Club and Melkweg (Mecca and Medina to the freaks, Sylla and Charybdis to the straights) they were staging the fourth One World Poetry Festival, entitled "Oorlog tegen Oorlog" (War on War). Here, Dub meets flower-and-leaf power (there's a narcotics counter, about as romantic as British Home Stores), remarkable crowds stood attentively while Masiis Kunene rocked and nodded approvingly to the Dutch translation of the English version of his Zulu originals. They listed with apparent comprehension and approval to Linton Kweisi Johnson, though I wondered what even the Anglophile Anglophone Dutch make of his local references:

SWP
Wont set me free
IMG
Cant do it for we
De Communist party
Too arty-farty . . .

It's humbling to observe the skill and relish with which Dutchmen wield English as a medium of artistic discourse. At the Stedelijk Museum (where, as always, the minimalist art set me longing for an equivalent to those helpful zoo signs that say "No Animals are Being Exhibited Here at the Moment"), I found an eminent local word-painter using quasi-English for his calligraphic pictures: "It is pazzed jaleoce and that is passed all form . . . this love is to big to can be nature . . .". Moreover, even the graffiti in the Stedelijk loo (how Dutch that word seems, suddenly) use English: "If you can read this you are creating modern art". "Painting should be an epic performance, not a lyrical passive acceptance", and a clever scatological spoonerism about someone called Shere Hite. (Apart, that, from the slogan "Kindersex vrij! Kinderrij sex!") at whose meaning I cannot even guess.)

But any language skill at all was a handicap at the enticingly named Micky Theatre, where I caught one evening of a five-day international semi-improvised performance of *Cannoe*, a choice example of the theatre of aphasia. The lengthy synopsis is worth quoting in full:

There was a woman (Wanda) who lived in a boat; she made her fire in a barrel and lived from her catches and her rich father who she was tired of fishing. One day she fell in love with a man who had a tie business and lived on the 23rd floor of a building near the main market-place. His main love was kangaroos and he was addicted to horse-racing. Wanda waited in the afternoon for him outside of his building but he never noticed her as he called. She consulted her sister who was happily married to a numerologist with three children. Her sister gave her very little help nor did her brother who was only interested in playing billiard.

One night at a family-reunion the topic came up and through the sister's unhappiness her father's husband found out her problem and told her to find out his birth-date. She became a concubine of a woman and after two days of trying she got the information she needed. Her brother in law told her the strange news he loved kangaroos and so through such a chain found a way to get one through a pet shop and then borrowed the money from her father. Finally, she was able to enter the door of the very tall building with the kangaroo.

Doe he fall in love with her or not?
I never did get to The Hague

El Alamein

Sir, - What evidence does Brian Montgomery have for asserting, in his review of John Strawn's *El Alamein* (January 29), that if Rommel had won Alamein, "we should have lost the Middle East altogether - Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq?" Rommel was fighting a defensive battle at Alamein: if he had won he still would have had to fight and win a second offensive battle against the much more powerful British forces, presumably at the same time as the Americans were advancing in his rear - for of course when Alamein was being fought the American invasion armada was already approaching North Africa. And even if Rommel had been able to fight and win a second, offensive battle, where would he have found the reserves of men, equipment and fuel for a major advance into Syria and Iraq?

STEPHEN HARVEY,
74 Roman Road, Colchester,
Essex.

that a victory which should have been easily achievable at any time during the previous twelve months was in fact a near-miraculous deliverance, Montgomery - and Churchill - surely did demonstrate more flair for public relations than military genius.

STEPHEN HARVEY,
74 Roman Road, Colchester,
Essex.

Johnson's Last Words

Sir, - Boswell's last words must be in dire straits if the best Paul Korshin (Letters, January 29) can do for the discredited account of Johnson's "last words" in Boswell's *Life* is to affirm that Boswell "possessed a lawyer's training in dealing with evidence, so if he rejected Hoole's account" - as well as Sir John Hawkins's account - "of Johnson's last words, he must have had reason to believe that he was not a trustworthy witness. . . . What that reason was, Boswell does not tell us, and no one else has ever found any reason to disbelieve Hoole's and Hawkins's testimony about this. Paul Korshin's faith in the judgment of lawyers would be touching, were it not that he omits to tell us that Hawkins was a lawyer too, and by most accounts a more successful one than Boswell."

Paul Korshin's quotation from the anonymous biography of 1786 is a red herring. Johnson's delirious utterance reported there is clearly dated on the evening of Sunday, December 12, 1784, the day before his death. "He recovered his senses before morning but spoke little after this." It is the text and timing of that "little" that we are concerned with. Through Hoole and Hawkins, who were at Johnson's bedside on the day of his death, we learn that: (a) some time before eleven am Johnson spoke the words "God bless you" to a Miss Morris; (b) some time after eleven, in Hoole's presence, he grumbled about the way his milk was handed to him; (c) "in his last moments" before his death at a quarter to seven, he spoke the words "I am moriturus" to Francesco Sastres.

The truth about Alamein is that it was a victory that should have been won in November 1941 - perhaps even in June 1941. Rommel had been enormously outnumbered in men and material for over a year before his defeat at Montgomery's hands. In making the world believe

that a victory which should have been easily achievable at any time during the previous twelve months was in fact a near-miraculous deliverance, Montgomery - and Churchill - surely did demonstrate more flair for public relations than military genius.

STEPHEN HARVEY,
74 Roman Road, Colchester,
Essex.

Among this week's contributors

PETER ACKROYD's first novel, *The Great Fire of London*, was published earlier this year.

ALAN ANGELL is a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford.

AVERIL CAMERON is Professor of Ancient History at King's College, London.

TERENCE CAVE is the author of *Devotional Poetry in France, 1570-1613*, 1969.

CHINWEZU is associate editor of the African-Literary Journal *Okike*. His books include *The West and The Rest of Us*, 1975, and he is co-author of *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*, 1980.

MICHAEL CROWDER is currently joint honorary director of the International African Institute and a Visiting Fellow of the Centre for International Studies, London School of Economics.

NORMAN DEL MAR is the author of *Richard Strauss*, 1962-1972.

J. B. DONNE is the translator of *Gauguin's Noa Noa*, 1980.

DENNIS DUERDEN's books include *African Art and Literature: The Invisible Presence*, 1980.

CHRIL EHRLICH is Professor of Economic and Social History at Queen's University, Belfast.

HUMPHRY J. FISHER is Reader in African History, at the School of Oriental and African Studies.

ROY FORSTER's *Lord Randolph Churchill: A Political Life* was published last year.

(Korshin writes, "... of course, Boswell knew that Hoole had not been present at Johnson's deathbed". He was not present at the moment Johnson died; that in no way invalidates his testimony that he heard the complaint about the milk after Miss Morris had left the house.)

Paul Korshin thinks that Boswell's choosing to print only a statement by his brother David, giving no timing and no indication of its source - David was certainly not one of the group at Bolt Court on the day of Johnson's death - averting that Johnson's "last words" were the blessing for Miss Morris (with the addition of "my dear") "shows how well Boswell could deal with conflicting evidence". There is no conflict in the evidence: that Johnson said "God bless you" some time before eleven o'clock in no way conflicts with the uncontradicted reports that some time later he complained about his milk, and that shortly before a quarter to seven he said, "I am moriturus". Boswell makes no attempt to rebut the evidence presented by Hoole and Hawkins: he simply ignores its existence. I doubt that this technique of advocacy would much commend itself to the average judge and jury, or that I should be very confident of the outcome if Boswell were to conduct a case of mine in this fashion before a court.

If Korshin objects to my terming Boswell's passing over the reports of the later utterances a "falsification", I will settle for his own term, "inaccuracy" - though perhaps the neologism "disinformation" is useful here. I did not accuse Boswell of deliberate falsification, as Korshin charges: I wrote that perhaps it was merely carelessness - we know from the Malahide papers that Boswell wrote the last part of the *Life* in depression and harassment. All the same, apropos of Boswell as advocate, it might be remembered that he was much concerned that his *Life* should successfully compete with, indeed supersede, Hawkins's, and he would probably have been pleased to learn how nearly he succeeded in consigning Hawkins's report of Johnson's last words to oblivion - though W. J. Bate's entitling the chapter in his *Samuel Johnson* dealing with

Johnson's death "I am Moriturus" has certainly rehabilitated it.

As I pointed out, Boswell's account of Johnson's "last words" directly follows a version of Johnson's prayer for his last communion in which important parts of the text are silently omitted. A fuller text had appeared in Hawkins's *Life*, and Johnson's autograph manuscript of the prayer, which still exists (and which Boswell had in his possession), confirms the authenticity of Hawkins's printed text and the falsity of Boswell's. The discrepancy is not likely to engender great confidence in Boswell's methods of dealing with conflicting evidence.

DONALD GREENE.

English Department, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California 90007.

Women and Pornography

Sir, - Like J. A. Penrose, I was struck by the two related reviews by J. G. Weightman and Roger Scruton (January 1). It seemed to me as well that they had got wrong the nature of human experience and the ways in which we write, or ought to write, and speak about it. None of us, of whatever eminence or whichever sex, can make any special claim. I wish to think that women would judge me, and all as a human individual who happened to be male. I wish to think that women should be judged in the same terms. And I do not think that either of your distinguished reviewers has managed this.

Roger Scruton (who has some reason to know my admiration of his theoretical writing) seems to me particularly wrong on the subject of how we refer to people. In writing or in conversation, no doubt there have been linguistic and other excesses perpetrated by feminists: I remember a barbarism, "herstory". But if women are thought to grow elongated or foolish for a season, we men should think of the centuries that our male ancestors, and some of us ourselves, have spoken unjustly about women.

Above all, we should consider with Penrose and Jane Alken Hodge that we can write natural English that does not deprecate women. I do not mean the tedious *he/she* or *she/he*. And I do recognize that to write such natural English it is necessary to reconstitute our grammar and syntax. To do so also requires reconstituting our thinking, which is precisely the issue involved.

What is at stake is a matter of simple human justice. Matters of that kind are not easily dealt with, of course, but it escapes my understanding how the fundamental issue can elude the awareness of intelligent men.

EARL MINER
Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey 0854.

'Opium and the People'

Sir, - Alethea Hayter writes in her review of Virginia Berridge and Griffith Edwards's *Opium and the People* the "reassuring picture" of the popular use of opium in Victorian times:

This reassuring picture makes the reader feel that in describing religion as the opium of the people, Marx was not being as rude to religion as we now suppose, or as he intended; what he was comparing it with was a form of working-class self-help, in circumstances of hardship and poverty-induced disease, a sensible palliative for the evils inflicted by society - a mild analogy for, rather than an exorcism, of religion.

Correct as this conclusion may be from the information provided by Berridge and Edwards, it is necessary to place Marx's description of religion as the opium of the people into its German context rather than that of the Victorian England

not yet known to him when he used the phrase in 1843. We would find, moreover, that others had used the phrase before Marx, but in an entirely positive sense, no longer present in Marx's general argument. The Romantic poet Novalis, for example, employed the expression in the late eighteenth century to praise the effects of religion on the common people, while also indicating his personal approval of hallucinatory drugs.

Previous to this, some popular nineteenth and seventeenth-century representations show Christ as an apothecary, dispensing doses of herbal drugs and remedies; some pictures were labelled "Faith, Hope, and Charity". These pictures were often hung in the apothecaries, housed in convents or monasteries (the Museum für Volkskunde in Innsbruck has one hanging above part of an old apothecary from an 18th-century convent of the seventeenth century), and would - in modern parlance - have served to legitimize the white magic dispensed. That Marx was, however, paradoxically rejecting the defence of religion as an opiate should be obvious from the context of his argument, in which he condemns the politically blinding effect of religion on those who have taken it as an opiate.

M. A. ROSE

c/o Heine Institut, 4000 Düsseldorf 1, Bilkerstr. 14, German Federal Republic.

Joseph Roth

Sir, - Michael Hofmann, reviewing *Weights and Measures*, the English translation of Joseph Roth's *Das falsche Gewicht* (February 5), advances the theory that the name "Eibenschütz" is a crippled version of "Schubenschütz". In fact, it is the German version of the Czech place-name Ivančice, near Brno. Eibenschütz is, I think, a perfectly decent surname for the Inspector of Weights and Measures, who, according to Roth, came from Nikolsburg (Mikulov) in Moravia.

NICOLETTE MOUT.

Oranje Nassaustraat 27, 2361 LB Warmond, The Netherlands.

'Books in Science'

Sir, - Andreas Vesalius seems fated to scatter confusion on posterity. William Le Fanu (Letters, January 15) is quite right in correcting your reviewer Redmond O'Hanlon (Commentary, December 18) on the background site of the "muscle-men" in *De Fabrica* but wrong to credit Harvey Cushing with the discovery, when the continuity and location had been recognized around Padua long before Cushing's bio-bibliography of Vesalius. William Le Fanu and Cushing are also rash to include Jan van Calcar "Vesalius's artist". True, Calcar was definitely responsible for three of the earlier *Tabulae Sex* plates, and likely therefore to have contributed some of the *De Fabrica* illustrations, but I think very few observers would "give" Calcar either the "muscle-men" or the large plates of the *Epitome*, and this seemed to be the stance of the 1976 Venice centenary exhibition of book plates and drawings of Titian's circle.

A reasonable agreement seems: (1) Jan van Calcar helped Vesalius himself with illustrations during the early years of the latter's professorship in Padua. This is stated by Vesalius and documented for Calcar. (2) The illustrations of *De Fabrica* are so mixed in size and quality that it is fair to assume that their authorship is also mixed. (3) The illustration of the dissecting table, with its stunning arrangement of instruments, must be Flemish, probably by either Calcar or Vesalius himself. (4) Domenico Campanola is the strongest candidate for the "muscle-men" and the large plates of the *Epitome*.

OLIVER JELLY.

The Rocket Cart House, Angle Dyfed SA71 5AH.

to the editor

Charles I's Executioner

Sir. - The William Walker alleged to be the executioner of Charles I (John Schellenberger, Letters, January 22) has also been a longtime candidate for the translator of the monarchomach tract *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos*, first published in Latin in 1579. A manuscript note in the British Library copy of the 1689 English edition reads: "This translation was the work of Mr William Walker of Durnal near Sheffield, the person who cut off King Charles's Head." This fact is noted in the Thomson Tracts catalogue, I, 597 (referring to the 1648 English version).

J. M. H. SALMON,
Department of History, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania 19010.

Sir. - Was the Wm Hulet (or Hulet) who was supposedly an assistant at the execution of Charles I, a former petty canon of Gloucester, to whom in 1631 the new dean, Accepted Frewen, gave his first monition when "noe occasion being given him", Hulet spoke "insolently and unmanly" to him in the presence of the quire? Vide my *Godfrey Goodman, Bishop of Gloucester, 1583-1636* (1953) p. 188, where a footnote adds: "The Common Singing Men in Cathedral Churches, the sixty sixth character in Earle's *Microcosmography* might have been based on the Gloucester Chapter Acts. It is worth noting that a certain William Hulet was suspected after the Restoration of being the executioner of Charles I." A further footnote on p. 346 shows that he was probably, ordained.

GEOFFREY SODEN,
Buck Brigg, Hanworth, Norfolk.

Intellectual Resistance

Sir. - Robert Boyers is no doubt correct, in his review (January 15) of James Wilkinson's *The Intellectual Resistance in Europe*, to infer that "the larger picture reveals how rapidly hope gave way to resignation". Hope, at least political hope, makes a habit of doing just that. I should have liked to have seen more evidence, however, that Boyers had consulted some of the primary sources (apart from the French ones) on whom Wilkinson has drawn.

Boyers's lack of familiarity with Wilkinson's subject becomes transparent at times, but someone ought to have queried him about at least some of his salutes into the intellectual history of the period. "It is hard to be impressed", Boyers writes, "the poetry of German émigrés [sic]"

who submitted mournfully to Hitler as if he were a force of nature... The phrase for which your reviewer was groping was "inner émigrés", without the adjective and the quotation marks, and in the security of exile, German intellectuals and writers did not submit, mournfully or otherwise.

Again, "Important Italian writers like Pavese and Vittorini have had only a modest number of their works translated into English, and these are in general not widely read or discussed." A glance at the Skidmore College library catalogue and a self-assigned bit of reading of the many translations published on both sides of the Atlantic - of varying quality, to be sure - would have convinced him otherwise. *Il Politecnico*, the first review Vittorini edited, could not have been launched to resist fascism or criticized by Togliatti's *Rinascita* for nurturing open debate, because neither journal was published clandestinely. Instead, *Il Politecnico* was born and died during the immediate postwar period, by which time hope was indeed giving way to resignation. Pavese's feelings about America were a lot more complex and ambivalent, even after the war, than Wilkinson suggests and Boyers echoes uncritically. In any case, one of the things Pavese resisted was systematic politics (see his diary, badly and incompletely translated though it is).

Intellectual history, especially of a recent epoch, contains pitfalls for reviewers as much as for the historians who write it. Your readers deserve more than warnings about the dangers of succumbing to "irrational prophetism", whatever that may be.

RICHARD KOFFLER,
Association of American Universities Presses, 1 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

Yorkists and Tudors

Sir. - I am grateful to Isobel Wigram for so rapidly offering proof for my allegation that the champions of Richard III cherish an incompressible passion for which no historical justification can be found. In such cases, argument is obviously pointless; it will make no difference that I can readily demonstrate the absence of any venom or defensiveness in my assessment of that king. The discourteous reply (a real temptation) would simply transfer the printed on February 12 to the first; courtesy enjoins that the devout be left to their prayers.

George Bernard's letter offers a more valuable contribution, though in his desire to deny that the six-

teenth century differed from the fifteenth he seems to have misunderstood the point I was making. In speaking of a "national" king I was talking about political tactics, not about possibly elevated purposes, and I really cannot see how poor Anne Boleyn got into the act. We are all agreed that the Tudors depended as fully as their predecessors and successors on that partnership between king and "political" nation which has always characterized successful government in England. However, what happened in the decades after 1450 prevented the application of the formula because the monarchs then confined partnership to well-defined sections of the nobility (ie the political nation of the day) and joined in the factious attacks upon others. As the event showed, this was a poor way of preserving that stability and tranquillity which, as Dr Bernard says, it was in the interest of the ruling order to maintain. So far as I can judge, Henry VII deliberately endeavoured to avoid being stamped as the head of a Tudor, or indeed a Lancastrian, faction, whereas politically Edward IV remained a Yorkist and Richard III a northerner.

G. R. ELTON,
Clare College, Cambridge CB2 1TL.

Eudora Welty

Sir. - As a resident of Columbus, Ohio, I would be delighted to learn that Eudora Welty had actually gone to school here, but in fact it was in Columbus, Mississippi, that Miss Welty attended Mississippi State College for Women before going to the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and the Columbia School of Business in New York City.

I was surprised to learn also, in Jennifer Uglow's review (January 8) of Eudora Welty's *Collected Stories*, that in England *One Time, One Place* is thought of as a novel; the book we have is a volume of photographs of rural Southern poor people - black and white - that Miss Welty took with a Kodak box camera as a WPA worker during the Depression. She wrote one story called "Keels, the Outcast Indian Maiden" (not two, each with part of that title), and another called "A Shower of Gold" (not "The Golden Shower").

I am glad that Miss Welty is getting some recognition in the UK; a nation that nurtured the Powys brothers and Elizabeth Bowen should appreciate her wonderful stories.

SUZANNE FERGUSON,
Department of English, Ohio State University, 164 West 17th Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43210.

Information, please

Olwen Bowen and Harry Rowntree, author and illustrator of *Beetles and Things* (Elkin Mathews, 1931); information sought about their subsequent careers.

R. P. Cooper, Clebe House, Sopworth, Chippingham, Wiltshire.

George Herbert: whereabouts of the manuscript of c1680, an adaptation for singing of *The Temple*, by "I. B.", described by Grosart in his 1874 edition of Herbert. At the time Grosart was writing, the manuscript was in the possession of "P. V. Cosens, Esq., London".

Department of English, Baylor University, Waco, Texas 76798.

Louis Drimmond McRae, of McRae (b. 1915), Battle of Britain pilot; graduate of Oxford, London School of Economics by 1952, son of Walter McRae, d. 1947, prominent Canadian lecturer, whereabouts of descendants and any ex-hat papers sought.

Anthony, 2500 Main Street, Toronto M7A 2R9.

Edward Jacob, lawyer, British Residency, administrator and Native Advocate, Joint Court, New Hebrides (1911); author of *France and England in the New Hebrides* (1914); personal papers, correspondence, reminiscences sought for inclusion in a history of the land question in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu).

W. E. Stober, 115 Selly Park Road, Selly Park, Birmingham B29 7HY.

Wilfred Lawson, stage and film actor; letters, other documentary material, and personal reminiscences sought for a forthcoming biography.

Peter Cotes, Robinson Books, Bolsover House, 5-6 Clifton Street, London W1P 7EB.

Geoffrey Madan (1895-1947); letters etc sought for a privately printed memoir.

Beatrice Brookbank, Mill House, Higham, Colchester, Essex.

Lord Raglan (1885-1964), author of *The Hero*; citations of articles, reviews, letters, etc; for a collection of miscellaneous essays and a bibliography of his work.

William Logan, 5 Pretoria Road, Cambridge.

Dorothy L. Sayers (1893-1957); would anyone in possession of any letters of hers please contact me, preferably indicating the date of each letter, whether handwritten or typed, approximate length and subject-matter, with a view to its eventual inclusion in an edition of her Selected Letters and Miscellaneous Writings.

Anthony Fleming, c/o Bright Higham Associates Ltd, 5-8 Lower John Street, Golden Square, London W1R 4HA.

Frederick Courtenay Selous, noted hunter and traveller in Southern Africa; whereabouts of any manuscript materials by him or relating to his career (except those in the National Archives of Zimbabwe); for a biography.

J. A. Casady, Department of History, Winthrop College, Rock Hill, SC 29735.

Literary criticism in brief

Shakespeare

DOUGLAS MIDDLEBROOK:

Sweet My Love
A study of Shakespeare's Sonnets
159pp. Adelaide: The New Word Press. (Distributed in the U.K. by Wendy Slade, 93 Talfourd Road, Peckham, London, S.E.15) £2.50.
0 908268 02 5

It is a remarkable aspect of human psychology that certain artistic creations and areas of knowledge seem to lend themselves to the attention of untrained enthusiasts. The civilisations of pre-Columbian America, the hypothetical cults of the Druids, the learning of the Egyptians, all attract such aficionados: in literature the prime candidate is Shakespeare. Why this is so is not altogether clear: why, for example, is there no attempt to prove that Richard II wrote the poems of Chaucer, that Richard III (or one of the Princes in the Tower) survived the Tudor conquest to write Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, or that Byron or Keats returned to England incognito to write the poems of Tennyson? The fact remains that Shakespeare, and particularly the Sonnets, are felt to be public property, to be reassigned and reinterpreted with a blithe dismissal of historical fact or plausibility.

Jean Wilson

Joyce

JACKSON I. COPE:

Joyce's Cities
Archaeologies of the Soul
144pp. The Johns Hopkins University Press. £7.75.
0 8018 2543 1

Jackson Cope begins by identifying a *fin-de-siècle* symbol of the city and dwells on James Thomson's "City of Dreadful Night" as a prefiguration of Joyce's presentation of "paralysis" in *Dubliners*. He invokes Dante, Eliot and, through Eliot, Jessie Weston, and he quotes in full Joyce's marvelous parody of *The Waste Land*: "Rouen is the rainiest place getting inside all impermeables, wetting Damp marrow in drenched bones." The argument covers a good deal of ground: from Macpherson and Chatterton to futurism, Walter Benjamin and Joyce's indebtedness to the mythic self-portraits of Gabriele D'Annunzio. The longest chapters discuss the contemporary interest in cabalistic tradition shown by MacGregor Mathers and Yeats in relation to *Ulysses* and the popular Egyptology of James Hope Moulton in relation to *Finnegans Wake*. Most

deliberately and elaborately - left uncertain as to whether he has spotted a coded communication system, or is imposing patterns of his own invention.

This isn't a particularly original perception about Pynchon: nor is Schaub's other main point - about the pervasiveness and significance of theories of entropy in the novels.

Where his study does offer something new is in its detailed elucidations of the often outé material worked into the books from Pynchon's encyclopaedic knowledge about the world and especially the nooks and crannies of history.

Showing an almost religious devotion to Pynchon's writings, Schaub provides much useful exegesis: though in rather ignoring the sleepstick, one stop revue aspects of the books, he tends to make them sound far more solemn than they are.

Peter Kemp

THOMAS H. SCHAU:
Pynchon: The Voice of Ambiguity
165pp. University of Illinois Press.
£2.50.
0 252 00816 2

"The experience of reading Pynchon," Thomas H. Schaub considers, "is really an analogue of the conundrums of search his books describe." Like the novels' protagonists, the reader is goaded into mentally ransacking a welter of diverse material in the hope of finding a definitive meaning; like them, he is thwarted. But "the uncertainties and ambiguities which attend the reading of Pynchon's fiction are not a failure of the reader: nor a result of authorial neglect or confusion." Lack of conclusive pattern is what the books are designed to show; doubt is the one thing you can be sure they're conveying. As with Oedipus at the end of *The Crying of Lot 49*, the reader is

ity. Even quite respectable scholars feel free to rearrange the order of the Sonnets, although as they stand they make as coherent reading as any other Elizabethan sonnet-sequence.

Douglas Middlebrook's book is, it is not as fine an example of the genre as Comyns Beaumont's *The Private Life of the Virgin Queen*, one to be savoured by those who appreciate quasi-academic dotiness. By an elaborate rearrangement of the Sonnets, he alleges four love-affairs with the Dark Lady, with Mr W.H. (William Hews, the boy-player, who went on playing female leads until he was well past 30), with Southampton (who developed an unreciprocated crush on the poet), and with an unidentified female flirt. He presents a new candidate for the Dark Lady, Mrs Will Kempe, on the grounds that Kempe's name was Will, that he was known to be musical, and that he was married. The main tenor of the book is its loud assertion that Shakespeare had homosexual tendencies (the blame for which seems to be placed, if I understand the self-indulgent Postscript, on Mary Arden). This will not be a new idea to many readers.

Jean Wilson

But is it the authors he loves or the grocery lists? The question is prompted not by the bulk of his book, which is less long than it seems, since more than a hundred pages are occupied by appendices and notes, but by its approach and style. In answer to a self-posed question about what is in his book which is not present in the biographies by Arthur Mizener (1951) and Andrew Turnbull (1962) he replies: more facts. This is undeniable, but many of the facts are those we do not need or wish to know. Of what value is it to be given a list of Fitzgerald's schoolboy friends, a list that extends over several lines and tells us that Richard Wastave was called "Tubby" and Gustave Schermeler "Bobby" when they played no recorded part in his adult life? Why should we be told that on his last day Fitzgerald ate a late sandwich lunch, read the newspapers, and wanted to go to nearby Schwab's drugstore on Sunset Boulevard for ice cream, but settled for a chocolate bar given him by Sheila Graham? Was it a Hershey bar, was the sandwich tuna fish or corned beef? If Brucoli knew, we may be sure he would have told us. Elsewhere we learn that 1896, the year of Fitzgerald's birth, was also that in which Benny Leonard, Legs Diamond, Lillian Glah, Buster Keaton and others saw the light, and that "Victoria was on the throne of the British Empire, Grover Cleveland was in the White House, and William McKinley and William Jennings Bryan were campaigning for the Presidency." This mass of facts is put down with the flatness of a stock market report. In the least of his stories Fitzgerald had a concern for style: that of his latest biographer is often graceless enough to set, the least sensitive teeth on edge.

So much must be said in dispraise, yet for anybody interested in Fitzgerald as man or writer, this is an indispensable book. It is less a biography than a document of record, one which makes occasional judgments on Fitzgerald the writer, but does not try to assess his character. Brucoli does not give all the facts that may be found elsewhere - he does not, for example, quote from the witty letter Fitzgerald sent to a woman who said she was making a study of his life and works, and given in full by Turnbull - but the claim to give more facts is abundantly justified. There is quite simply much more of everything here than can be found in any other single volume, and the final result justifies

the enterprise. We get, for example, the whole of the seven-page memorandum written by Fitzgerald in 1930 (but perhaps not sent) "with Zelda gone to the Clinique", and the forty-two page summary of their marriage written by Zelda in the same year. These are distressing evidence of the destructive character of their love. "We ruined ourselves - I have never honestly thought that we ruined each other," he says at the end of his memorandum, but Zelda's letter accuses him of neglect, drunkenness ("You were literally eternally drunk the whole summer"), and again and again of a failure to love. "I know in my heart... that love is bitter and all there is, and that the rest is for the emotional beggars of the earth and is about the equivalent of people who stimulate themselves with dirty postcards".

Two years later they were locked in a savage conflict over Zelda's novel that became *Save Me The Waltz*. Brucoli gives extracts, transcribed from "a dim microfilm" at Johns Hopkins Hospital, of an extraordinary session presided over by Zelda's current doctor, in which Fitzgerald's chief concern was that her writing would damage his reputation, hers to assert herself as a creative personality independent of her husband. The exchanges were brutal. He called her a third-rate writer and ballet dancer, and insisted that she must do exactly what he said. "If I make a trip to Panama and you and I go around - I am the professional novelist and I am supporting you. This is all my material. None of it is your material." At this time Fitzgerald had not published a novel for seven years, and Zelda's reply was a shrewd thrust: "What is the matter with Scott is that he has not written that book and if he will ever get it written, why he won't feel so miserable and suspicious and mean towards everybody else." In reading such passages, and there are many of them, it is necessary to remember that Fitzgerald was drinking hard, and that Zelda was schizophrenic. Even so, the benefits derived from such battles, with the psychiatrist playing the part of mostly ignored umpire, seem doubtful. After this session Fitzgerald for the first time thought seriously of divorce.

Eliot's remark about the division in the artist between the man who suffers and the mind that creates found a perfect exemplification in Fitzgerald, although in his case the suffering was caused partly by his delighted determination to embrace the bitch goddess Success. The ambition to be a great writer was apparent from his mid-teens, and when in 1917 he began writing a novel in Army training camp, it was because he expected to be killed in action, and wished to leave behind some evidence of his genius. Abundant evidence of his desire to learn his craft and to write well is apparent in the elaborate plotting and replotting of every novel, the unstinting readiness to rewrite, the culturally educated lists he made out for himself and others, from the balance-sheet of his sister's merits and defects drawn up in youth to the "College of One" fiction reading-list he made out for Sheila Graham in Hollywood. Fitzgerald was academically unsuccessful at Princeton, and never learnt to spell, but it would be true to say that he educated himself painstakingly in the things that mattered to him, and did it very well. The dramatic improvement he often effected by rewriting can be seen in the two editions of *The Great Gatsby*, both printed here. But he wanted not only to write well but to be praised for it, both by his friends and a wider general public. If Fitzgerald (1) was a pure artist, Fitzgerald (2) was constantly concerned about his position on the writing ladder. Was he being overvalued by Hemingway, whose work he had generously praised when Hemingway was unknown? How did he stand in relation to other members of his generation? Going out to Hollywood for the third time in 1937, at the age of forty, he wrote to his daughter that a few years back:

"I had been generally acknowledged for several years as the top American writer both seriously and, as far as (but perhaps not sent) 'with Zelda gone to the Clinique', and the forty-two page summary of their marriage written by Zelda in the same year. These are distressing evidence of the destructive character of their love. 'We ruined ourselves - I have never honestly thought that we ruined each other,' he says at the end of his memorandum, but Zelda's letter accuses him of neglect, drunkenness ('You were literally eternally drunk the whole summer'), and again and again of a failure to love. 'I know in my heart... that love is bitter and all there is, and that the rest is for the emotional beggars of the earth and is about the equivalent of people who stimulate themselves with dirty postcards'.

MATTHEW J. BRUCOLI:

Some Sort of Epic Grandeur
The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald
624pp. Hodder and Stoughton.
£14.95.
0 340 275790

Matthew J. Brucoli is the head of the Scott Fitzgerald industry, no mere guardian, but a spreader of the sacred flame. A list of books in which he has been editorially or otherwise involved, printed before the title page of this biography, mentions fifteen works concerned with Fitzgerald. They include two volumes of previously uncollected stories, the author's correspondence with his agent Harold Ober, a collection of other letters, his notebooks and a ledger of earnings, as well as a facsimile of *The Great Gatsby* and an "Apparatus for a Definitive Edition" of that book. Nor is Fitzgerald the only American novelist who has felt the benevolent Brucoli editorial hand. Here is *Ernest Hemingway, Cub Reporter*, here is a collection of Raymond Chandler's youthful essays and poems, and elsewhere the minutiae, bibliographic and otherwise, of Ross Macdonald, Ring Lardner, John O'Hara and James Gould Cozzens. Professor Brucoli is the contemporary champion picker-up of unconsidered trifles, or as Fitzgerald's daughter Scottie once put it, he loves his authors so much that if he found one of their grocery lists he would publish it in an annotated edition.

But is it the authors he loves or the grocery lists? The question is prompted not by the bulk of his book, which is less long than it seems, since more than a hundred pages are occupied by appendices and notes, but by its approach and style. In answer to a self-posed question about what is in his book which is not present in the biographies by Arthur Mizener (1951) and Andrew Turnbull (1962) he replies: more facts. This is undeniable, but many of the facts are those we do not need or wish to know. Of what value is it to be given a list of Fitzgerald's schoolboy friends, a list that extends over several lines and tells us that Richard Wastave was called "Tubby" and Gustave Schermeler "Bobby" when they played no recorded part in his adult life? Why should we be told that on his last day Fitzgerald ate a late sandwich lunch, read the newspapers, and wanted to go to nearby Schwab's drugstore on Sunset Boulevard for ice cream, but settled for a chocolate bar given him by Sheila Graham? Was it a Hershey bar, was the sandwich tuna fish or corned beef? If Brucoli knew, we may be sure he would have told us. Elsewhere we learn that 1896, the year of Fitzgerald's birth, was also that in which Benny Leonard, Legs Diamond, Lillian Glah, Buster Keaton and others saw the light, and that "Victoria was on the throne of the British Empire, Grover Cleveland was in the White House, and William McKinley and William Jennings Bryan were campaigning for the Presidency." This mass of facts is put down with the flatness of a stock market report. In the least of his stories Fitzgerald had a concern for style: that of his latest biographer is often graceless enough to set, the least sensitive teeth on edge.

So much must be said in dispraise, yet for anybody interested in Fitzgerald as man or writer, this is an indispensable book. It is less a biography than a document of record, one which makes occasional judgments on Fitzgerald the writer, but does not try to assess his character. Brucoli does not give all the facts that may be found elsewhere - he does not, for example, quote from the witty letter Fitzgerald sent to a woman who said she was making a study of his life and works, and given in full by Turnbull - but the claim to give more facts is abundantly justified. There is quite simply much more of everything here than can be found in any other single volume, and the final result justifies

the enterprise. We get, for example, the whole of the seven-page memorandum written by Fitzgerald in 1930 (but perhaps not sent) "with Zelda gone to the Clinique", and the forty-two page summary of their marriage written by Zelda in the same year. These are distressing evidence of the destructive character of their love. "We ruined ourselves - I have never honestly thought that we ruined each other," he says at the end of his memorandum, but Zelda's letter accuses him of neglect, drunkenness ('You were literally eternally drunk the whole summer'), and again and again of a failure to love. "I know in my heart... that love is bitter and all there is, and that the rest is for the emotional beggars of the earth and is about the equivalent of people who stimulate themselves with dirty postcards'.

Two years later they were locked in a savage conflict over Zelda's novel that became *Save Me The Waltz*. Brucoli gives extracts, transcribed from "a dim microfilm" at Johns Hopkins Hospital, of an extraordinary session presided over by Zelda's current doctor, in which Fitzgerald's chief concern was that her writing would damage his reputation, hers to assert herself as a creative personality independent of her husband. The exchanges were brutal. He called her a third-rate writer and ballet dancer, and insisted that she must do exactly what he said. "If I make a trip to Panama and you and I go around - I am the professional novelist and I am supporting you. This is all my material. None of it is your material." At this time Fitzgerald had not published a novel for seven years, and Zelda's reply was a shrewd thrust: "What is the matter with Scott is that he has not written that book and if he will ever get it written, why he won't feel so miserable and suspicious and mean towards everybody else." In reading such passages, and there are many of them, it is necessary to remember that Fitzgerald was drinking hard, and that Zelda was schizophrenic. Even so, the benefits derived from such battles, with the psychiatrist playing the part of mostly ignored umpire, seem doubtful. After this session Fitzgerald for the first time thought seriously of divorce.

A gift for hope

By Julian Symons

had been generally acknowledged for several years as the top American writer both seriously and, as far as (but perhaps not sent) "with Zelda gone to the Clinique", and the forty-two page summary of their marriage written by Zelda in the same year. These are distressing evidence of the destructive character of their love. "We ruined ourselves - I have never honestly thought that we ruined each other," he says at the end of his memorandum, but Zelda's letter accuses him of neglect, drunkenness ("You were literally eternally drunk the whole summer"), and again and again of a failure to love. "I know in my heart... that love is bitter and all there is, and that the rest is for the emotional beggars of the earth and is about the equivalent of people who stimulate themselves with dirty postcards'.

In that last quotation appears Fitzgerald (3), who was interested above all in the sound of the cash register. It was this Fitzgerald who kept the Ledger, reproduced in part here as an appendix, which showed the amount he had earned each year by writing, and divided the total sum between books, stories and articles. Nearly \$20,000 dollars in 1920, more than \$25,000 two years later, almost \$30,000 in 1927, a peak of \$37,000 odd in 1931, and then decline to little more than \$10,000 in 1936. The Ledger was kept meticulously, with book royalties entered even when they were almost non-existent, like the \$58.35 for all book royalties in 1934. When Fitzgerald went to Hollywood for the last time he gave up the record, perhaps because income from sources other than work on film-strips was discouragingly low. The last royalty statement before his death showed forty copies sold of all books, the royalty being \$13.13.

Long before this, however - indeed, very early on - Fitzgerald had realized that novels paid much less well than the short stories he found it so easy to write. The amount he was paid for stories - although not all stories, and generally not the best stories - went up and up. When he told Hemingway in 1929: "Here's a last flicker of the old cheap pride - the *Post* now pays the old where \$4,000 a screw", all three Fitzgeralds had a share in the remark. Fitzgerald (1) called the stories whoring, Fitzgerald (2) couldn't help feeling proud to be tops, Fitzgerald (3) took the money as just reward for having "mastered the 40 positions". A moral censor also existed, who brooded over all three Fitzgeralds, and was dissatisfied with almost everything they did. Another aspect of the censor appears in his severely pedagogical treatment of the youthful Scottie and of Sheila Graham; and his shocked surprise when he learned that Sheila had slept with eight men.

Although seven lines of the excellent index refer to "drinking problem", Brucoli offers no suggestions about any basic cause for Fitzgerald's drinking, beyond a couple of pages of textbook definition of alcoholism, and mention of a psychiatrist who in 1939 diagnosed Fitzgerald as suffering from hypoglycaemia or hyperlipidemia, which causes a craving for sugar that may be eased by alcohol. Fitzgerald's blood-sugar count was normal, however, and Brucoli gets no further than the suggestion that he "sometimes drank to alleviate the feelings of guilt provoked by his drinking". But alcoholism is a symptom, not a cause. What started the drinking?

The facts that Fitzgerald's father was a business failure and a heavy drinker cannot be ignored, but the possibility that the origins of Fitzgerald's drinking were chiefly sexual is not seriously considered here, although there is evidence that his relationship with Zelda was less than satisfactory. He was much concerned when she accused him of having a homosexual relationship with Hemingway (Fitzgerald was contemptuous of "frits"), and also when she complained that his penis was too small. After explanation by Hemingway and others the penis was sufficiently normal, but Fitzgerald was sufficiently worried to try an experimental session with a prostitute. All this happened in the late 1920s, by which time Zelda was near breakdown, but their frantic drinking and reckless behaviour in the years after marriage in 1920 may have been an expression of sexual frustration.

That is conjecture, but the facts are here. Fitzgerald began with "drugstore sherry" in his mid-teens at Princeton drank only beer and was thought to be clowning when he appeared to be "tight" but by the

mid-1920s was a steady drinker, for preference of straight gin "which gave him the quickest lift". Brucoli tells us that his tolerance of alcohol was low, so that like Poe he got drunk easily. In the last decade of his life it was downhill most of the way, with prodigious benders being succeeded by brief periods off the sauce. No other novelist has written so many scenes about drunks in so few books (food is rarely mentioned in Fitzgerald), and drinking is for the most part seen disapprovingly. Yet the censor sometimes relaxed. *The Beautiful and Damned*, which for the most part could serve as a text on the evils of drink, contains a passage near the end about "the kindliness of intoxication... that indescribable gloss and glamour it gave, like the memories of ephemeral and faded evenings".

In simple terms - that is, ignoring motives - alcoholism wrecked Fitzgerald's life and his literary career. Zelda was a subsidiary factor: indeed, it might be said that if she had not existed Fitzgerald would have found it necessary to discover a stand-in for her, some other woman companion on what Brucoli calls the drunkard's holiday. The facts that Zelda was herself emotionally unable to cope with life and had a thwarted instinct for literary creation were not accidental: in youth Fitzgerald did not want a Sheila Graham to educate and rebel against, but a rival to whom he could always be superior. Zelda wrote for publication her own review of *The Beautiful and Damned*, in which she suggested that her husband had plagiarized a bit of her diary; she "always felt a story in the *Post* was tops", and such mild bickering and evidence of her intellectual inferiority was not uncommon. Later on, of course, with her collapse, the battle between them became a strain under which they cracked. Carl Van Vechten expressed their relationship succinctly when in the unjustly forgotten *Parties* he said, in a sentence quoted here: "Rilda and David tortured each other because they loved one another devotedly."

The rest of the story is familiar, although Brucoli corrects the record on several minor points. *This Side of Paradise* sold 50,000 copies, but was not one of the ten best-selling novels of 1920 (of course we get the names of the ten authors). The reception of *Tender Is the Night* was critically disappointing, but there is a list of the many fellow writers who admired it. The books were not out of print when Fitzgerald died, and "the popular image of Fitzgerald as a broken-down, forgotten failure in Hollywood is a distortion", although the many will be truth in Andrew Turnbull's picture of him as a man living in the past, asking questions about celebrities of the 1920s as though they were still in the news, unknown to most people around Hollywood except as a dimly remembered name.

The justification for so much attention to the life is the books; and the books have long since revived from their neglect in the author's last decade. The period of neglect was short. As early as 1943, the young Alfred Kazin was saying, in a book often harshly critical of the writers who came to fame in the 1920s, that Fitzgerald was "in some ways, inherently more interesting than any other (writer) in his generation". Two years later *The Portable F. Scott Fitzgerald* appeared, in which John O'Hara called him "out and out novelist". By 1951, when Arthur Mizener's biography was published, the tide was in full flow. Today there are books and articles by the dozen, including such publications as an illustrated booklet about Fitzgerald's "homes and haunts". In his native Minnesota. Even his Rivera friends Gerald and Sara Murphy have been the subjects of a biographical account, which pays much attention to their relationship with the Fitzgeralds. Such works as *Paradise Lost* and *The Beautiful and Damned* are being reissued, and *The Great Gatsby*, which is the self-destructive drama, much of it played

out in public, has become blended with the work, so that the books take on a meretricious glow and glamour from the life. If one looks at the work separately from the life, its merits may be seen more reasonably.

This Side of Paradise was the much-revised version of a novel called *The Romantic Egoist*, a title that summarizes the nature of Fitzgerald's talent. His attitude to life was one of expectancy, and in the darkest days he believed in a future of infinite possibilities. That incredulous cry of Gatsby's: "Can't repeat the past? Why of course you can," was Fitzgerald's own, and his creed is enshrined in the books's last two paragraphs, about Gatsby's belief in "the organic future that year by year recedes before us", and that melts into the perfect past. It was the belief in a perfect relationship, a perfect novel, a perfect life, that kept optimism shining bright through Zelda's schizophrenia, his own crack-up, the humiliations of a Hollywood where he was one of sixteen writers who worked on *Gone With the Wind*. Romanticism, not conceit, prompted those fine phrases about being the last of the novelists for a long time now" and about the epic grandeur to be discovered in his life, a romantic dream of the past that led him to call his final assault on Hollywood "the last tired effort of a man who once did something finer".

No doubt part of him knew that he was just making fine phrases, but he might have asked: what else except fine phrases should a writer make? There is an innocence about his absolute romanticism that gives charm to what would otherwise seem ludicrous or hopelessly over-written scenes in the early novels, and to many of the slightest short stories. One of many near-ridiculous but charming passages comes near the end of *Paradise Lost*, where Amory reflects on the "many places where one might deteriorate pleasantly... where lust could be a mode and expression of life, where the shades of night skies and sunset would seem to reflect only moods of passion; the colours of lips and poppies". The 1890s, dying fall is agreeably done, but the real attraction of the passage is the evident youth and hopefulness of supposedly world-weary Amory. Fitzgerald himself remained, emotionally youthful, the possessor of Gatsby's "extraordinary gift: for hope", to the end.

With the romance went the energizing but artistically limiting egotism. The notebooks are evidence of how hard Fitzgerald tried to pin down the outer world of poverty, places and occasions, yet his chief male character is never anybody but Scott Fitzgerald, and the female one is almost always Zelda. Really he knew nobody but himself. Sara Murphy, who served as the physical model for Nicole in *Tender Is the Night*, put it with deadly accuracy: "You don't even know what Zelda or Scottie are like - in spite of your love for them. It seemed to us the other night (Gerald told) that all you thought and felt about them was in terms of yourself." Gerald Murphy was the original model for Dick Diver in *Tender*, but the problems he faces are Fitzgerald's. Monro Stair in *The Last Tycoon* is torn between his dead wife (the living but remote Zelda) and her apparent physical image, Kathleen (Sheila Graham), and again personal emotional problems damage a story which should be more concerned with other things. In *Gatsby* alone a kind of integration is achieved by splitting the Fitzgerald character in two: Nick Carraway, who is involved in the action yet comments on it as a Middle Western moral center, touched with innocence, and Gatsby himself, whose own curious integrity is out of keeping with his highly dubious business associations.

From the beginning, friends and admirers made allowances for the

were successful at the time largely because of the "daring" element about such matters as "that great American phenomenon 'the petting party'", and the way in which they caught contemporary, now-forgotten slang. A woman should be able to kiss a man "beautifully and romantically", Gloria tells Anthony Patch, without any desire to be wife or mistress, and later she says that men "have tried - oh, lots of things. Any pretty girl has had that experience." This passed for powerful stuff in the early 1920s, "the story of the youth of our generation", as Fitzgerald wrote to Edmund Wilson, who is accused of condescension by Brucoli without any convincing reason. Certainly the warning he gave at the time against the danger of becoming "a very popular trashy novelist" was apt, particularly when one reads dialogue like "I'm such a little fool she murmured brokenly", or the worldly-wise Minny's reflection: "Nothing - quite - sits - me."

Yet allowances were readily and rightly made. Maxwell Perkins, a constant prop throughout Fitzgerald's literary career, threatened to resign from Scribner's if they rejected *Paradise*, saying that: "If we're going to turn down the likes of Fitzgerald, I will lose all interest in publishing books." Mencken praised the "serious purpose and unquestionable skill" of *The Beautiful and Damned*. Behind the absurdities lie a readiness to experiment and an eagerness to excel that are not less impressive because the high intentions are mixed with low ones, and the experiments - the occasional shifts to dialogue in dramatic form, and the very short sections into which parts of the books are split up - were not completely successful. Fitzgerald's Princeton friend John Penic Bishop remarked "flaws of vulgarity in one who is awkward with his own vigor", and the vulgarity is often apparent, even more in most of the short stories than in these early novels. Fitzgerald was at the mercy too often of his own facility and showmanship. A part of him enjoyed, and perhaps positively admired, his flashy popularity, while another part, as he said, always wanted to preach at people.

Any doubt about Fitzgerald's genius, distinct from the way he used it, was dispelled by *Gatsby*. His problem was always how to accommodate this limited and self-involved genius within the form of a novel, and here he succeeded almost as perfectly as he would have wished. The subtlety of the writing, its blend of refinement and energy, its astonishing Daisy's sexual flirtatiousness when Nick visits the Buchanans, Nick's first vision of Gatsby seen at night fifty feet away, regarding "the silver pepper of the stars" and then stretching out his arms towards the dark water, the contrast between the leisure and luxury of the big houses and the valley of ashes along the motor road where Wilson's garage is sited under the blue gigantic eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg - these things and much else are shown to us with the most exquisite tact and effective understatement.

The book is also a structural triumph, primarily because of the distancing effect achieved by showing events through the eyes of Nick. The sophisticated society of New York is seen with a distance rarely more than implicit, by this mid-Westerner who has a certain innocence lying beneath his coolness, and it is a comment on the corruption of that society when Nick reflects at the end, as he returns home, that the Easterners will be tip of his provincial squeamishness forever. The misty, fairy-tale story of *Gatsby* and Daisy seems credible, and the final tragedy both natural and inevitable, because events are seen through Nick's eyes. That Daisy has, at least for Gatsby, the untouchable quality of a fairy-tale princess, is also made plausible because love-making in Fitzgerald is always romantic, with hardly ever a touch of sensuality. As he admitted to Edmund Wilson, he knew nothing about "the emotional relations between Gatsby and Daisy from the time of their reunion to the catastrophe" - and really he wished to know nothing - but as he went on to say, the concealment of this blank is a device. For a novelist like Fitzgerald, as often for Henry James, evasions are necessary, a book's structure and the chosen material

approach to the material are all important. In *Gatsby* Fitzgerald found the proper approach for his genius, the right story to accommodate it.

If this was the only time that everything fitted out perfectly, that was not because of any failure in conscientiousness. In 1933 Fitzgerald told a visitor that he had written 400,000 words of the book that became *Tender*, thrown three-quarters of it away, and that the final result would be "good, good, good". The reception of it was a disappointment to him, and he came to believe that the failure was structural, so that if the story were told in a straightforward time sequence, beginning with the first meeting between Dick and Nicole, its quality would be understood. The original version began with the introduction of the young actress Rosemary Hoyt to the Divers' Riviera set, and explained the relationship of Dick and Nicole in a long flashback.

He worked on this "final version" and in 1951 it was published, with an introduction by Malcolm Cowley weighing pros and cons, but the truth is that neither version makes us understand the reasons for Dick Diver's destruction. He is presented as a man whose life has been wrecked by the emotional demands of Nicole, but it was a delusion on the author's part to think that he had made this acceptable, any more than he had made the Riviera café society in which Dick spent his time seem to

have the charm he ascribed to it. They are a tiresome and trivial lot, one and all, and Dick is trivialized by association with them, so that when, near the end of the book, one character says, "Dick is no longer a serious man", one's response is: Was he ever?

Fitzgerald had not lost his skill at writing scenes, or putting sentences together. There are fine things in the novel, including the best of his many drunk scenes, and some brilliant characterization, especially in the portrait of Nicole's sister Baby Warren. The love-hate affair with the rich carried on throughout Fitzgerald's life and writing is also developed in the central theme that the Warren family have bought Dick, and in some fine images, like that of Nicole as somebody "designed for change, for flight, with money as fins and wings". But although Fitzgerald may have intended, as Cowley says, Stahr at work, dealing with the English writer George Boxley and looking at the leisure class, he failed to do it. He wrote about Scott and Zelda instead.

It is wrong to judge *The Last Tycoon* as though it were a completed work, although critics habitually do so in calling it Fitzgerald's unfinished masterpiece. A large part of the plot, that involving blackmail, murder, and the villainy of Stahr's partner Brady, has hardly been suggested. If the example of *Tender* had been followed, the manuscript would

certainly have been subject to many revisions, and the plot perhaps drastically changed. What we have - perhaps half a book, Brucoli suggests - is a less successful and subtle version of *Gatsby* in some respects, with Brady's daughter Cecilia in the role of innocent narrator. There are awkward shifts from first to third-person narration, and places where Cecilia is recording things told to her in a way that checks the course of the narrative. Such jarring notes might well have been removed in rewriting, but in the section of the book that was written the distancing effect reached through Nick is not paralleled, although it seems to have been intended.

To the other side the characterization of Stahr, even though he is burdened with some of Fitzgerald's emotional problems, makes him a figure much more strongly individual than Dick Diver. The scenes showing Stahr at work, dealing with the English writer George Boxley and looking at the leisure class, are new for Fitzgerald, and suggest something more than the fascination exerted on him by Hollywood. Yet it has to be borne in mind that, like all Fitzgerald's serious work, the book was primarily a love story. Nicole, in one of her first letters to Dick, echoes Zelda's desperation in her cry that "Love is all there is or should be", and we can be sure that *The Last Tycoon* was to bring the same message, in spite of the story's planned elements of murder and blackmail. "My girls were all

so warm and full of promise," Fitzgerald put down in a note. "What can I do to make it honest and different?" But his love stories turned into fairy tales, even though they were fairy tales with unhappy endings.

"I wish now I'd never related a looked back - but said at the end of *The Great Gatsby*: 'I've found my line'." Fitzgerald wrote to his daughter a few months before he died. But of course he did relax (although his left is less than he hoped, but was than most writers leave: one masterpiece, one interesting failure, a half-finished work that might have been a fine novel, and a collection of brilliant bits, including the short stories, which don't weigh heavily in the scales beside the best of the novels. That was a good deal to have got from a life so largely and tragically wasted. He knew his own failure to measure up to the greatness of his talent, and a better epitaph for him than any of his own grand phrases is a verse from John Peale Bishop's poem, written soon after his death:

I have lived with you the hour of your humiliation
I have seen you turn upon the others
And of sad self-loathing
Concealing nothing
Heard you cry: I am lost, but you are great
And you had that right
The damned do not so own to their damnation.

in his last years, giving him an unconditional loyalty. In 1884, he announced he would leave for America. As their daughter Tatiana put it, "neither (partner) would budge an inch. Both were defending something more important than their lives: the well-being of her children, be it very soul." In 1885, the process of alienation appeared complete: "I want a divorce" (Sonya was only forty-one). Her son Sergey thought that "the question of leaving home confronted my father throughout the last thirty years of his life"; in other words, from 1881 onwards. Tolstoy, in "burning his idols", had thrown Sonya on the pyre. She was asked to commit suicide in his lifetime, but she refused. A family of twenty-eight depended on her. She persevered, as his vegetarian cook, housekeeper, publisher, copyist, translator, nurse, hostess, even author and anthologist in her own right.

Yet Tolstoy could not give up; "if you do not accept my condition for a good peaceful life, then I will retract my promise not to leave you. I will go away." He had, of course, reminded Sonya that the "final" reason for such a break was their "absolutely contrary understanding of the meaning and purpose of life." Is this not the same hectoring author of the Valeriya correspondence, sixty-four years later? This time, however, the curtain dropped. Tolstoy "went away" - to death. He would not - in his son's phrase - "bear his cross to the end".

Anne Edwards has picked her way across the minefield of contradictory evidence, but author and publisher have made unnecessary mistakes. Random examples: Tsar Paul was murdered not at Gatchina but in St Petersburg. Tolstoy did not take the Cane but "Kumys" in the Caucasus in 1857, but at Samarkand. Samarkand is not in the Caucasus. The Winter Palace is in St Petersburg, not Moscow. Moscow is "little more than an overgrown village" on page 26, yet by page 104 we find Sonya "quickly caught up with the sophisticated life of the city". And Anne Edwards's careless style in dealing with nature, the weather, clothes, and moods brings her close to the world of the romantic novelist: "Porters bustled with luggage... there were tears, laughter and excitement"; "Sonya's spirited returned his forthright gaze"; "Tolstoy's golden hair shimmered beneath the large silver candelabra..."

Despite these lapses, in an overall long book, Anne Edwards has succeeded in arousing the reader's sympathy and understanding for Sonya. She was, in her own words, "a true writer's wife".

Six poems by Paul Muldoon

Mary Farl Powers: Pink Spotted Torso

I
She turns from the sink
Potato in hand, A Kerr's Pink,
Its water-dark
Port-wine birth-mark
That will answer her knife
With a hieroglyph.

II

The open book of Minnesota
Falls open at Main Street, an almost total
Sky, sweet nothings in the Soda
Fountain, joy-
Rides among the tidal
Wheat-fields, midnight swims with the Baumgartner boy.

You saw through that flooded granite-quarry
To the wreckage of an Oldsmobile,
Saw, never more clearly,
Him unmanacle
Himself from buckled steel, from the weight of symbol,
Only to be fettered by an ankle.



Big Foot

Comes, if he comes at all, among sumac
And birches, stops half-
Way across the clearing . . . Wood-smoke,
The cabin where you mourn your wife,

Where, darkening the tiny window,
Is the fur coat
You promised her when she was twenty
Or twenty-one, you forget.



From Strength To Strength

A Charolais, the new cow-calf
Will plunge out of her own shadow
As if from the bath.

Her bath-towel
Is a rich brocade.
She pummels herself. A talcum-rime.

She wants to meet the full-length
Mirror head-on.
She is palmed off by the meadow.

Mo, my aluminium bucket.
She takes her milk like medicine.
Though she may lift her fraying tail

To skitter-dung.
She goes from strength to strength.
A grasping, veal-pale tongue.

Blewits

They will be all fingers and thumbs
As they offer you a light
Or try to catch the bartender's eye
For two fresh whiskey sours.

They will seem shy
As they help you with your wrap,
Though their palms are played
Across your breasts. They half a cab.

And later, in the wee, small hours,
You will lie on the bed
Of your own entrails,

To be fist-fucked all night
By blewits, or by chandeliers,
Until the morning that never comes.



The Salmon Of Knowledge

Out of the world of blood and snotters,
The inch-to-the-mille
World of the seal,
The yard-stick of lymph,

The unquenchable oomph
Of her whip, her thigh-length boot
On the other foot,
Her hacked gulp of semen -

Out of this world is the first salmon
Of the year, his ass-hole
Clean as a whistle.

Here lies one who reached for the sky.
There is a bay-leaf over his eye
And his name is writ on water.



Beaver

Let yourself in by the leaf-yellow door.
Go right up the stairs.

Along the way you may stumble upon
One girl in a dress

Of flour-bag white, the turkey-red
Of another's apron.

Give it no more thought
That you would a tree felled across a stream

In the Ozarks or the Adirondacks.
Step over her as you would across

A beaver-dam.
And try to follow that stream back

To the top of the stairs,
To your new room with its leaf-yellow floor.

Living with a Proteus

By Laurence Kelly

ANNE EDWARDS:

Sonya
The Life of Countess Tolstoy
512pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £8.50.
0 340 25002.

"For the first time", trumpets the dust-jacket, here is the story of Sonya Tolstoy's marriage, told "from her point of view". Sonya has told her own story in *My Life* more passionately than any later biographer could ever do. Nor is this the "first time" a woman has attempted the daunting task, a fact which Anne Edwards (but not her publisher) recognizes by quoting from Cynthia Asquith's *Married to Tolstoy* (1960). She also claims to have drawn on unpublished memoirs, obtained from Tolstoy's youngest daughter Alexandra, who died in 1979. Regrettably these are referenced only by page and not by specific quotation, but the essentials of Alexandra's story were published in any case in the 1930s. Alexandra's first "new" contribution refers to 1895 (Vanitchka's death) when she herself, born in 1884, was not more than eleven years old, while other material supplements, but no more, the known facts of Tolstoy's agonizing last year (1910). The author has also spoken to many Tolstoy grandchildren, but one must remember that seventy years have passed since his death, and Chinese whispers can be misleading.

There is no single truth about this marriage; Sonya had not one husband but many. Tolstoy, according to Gorky, the "most complex of the great men of the Nineteenth Century". Was a Proteus who took up the discarded and discarded more identities than a professional actor. The indefatigable fornicator, reformed himself into a (not very successful) professor of chastity. The obsessive sportsman and soldier became a pacifist. The self-flogging boyar transformed himself into an amateur muzhik and part-time cobbler. The writer abandoned his sinful art to become a teacher and prophet in whom - if we can believe Chertkov - "the Divine Principle expressed itself with such power and purity". To understand Sonya's problems in the marriage, one must decide which mask Tolstoy was wearing at any given time.

One of the most rewarding sources for an understanding of the marriage (though Ms Edwards does not exploit it) is the correspondence Tol-

stoy had in 1850 with Valeriya Arsenyeva, a pretty country neighbour, aged twenty. He considered himself engaged to her, called her "Darling", and over some seven months, unburdened himself to her of a philosophy of love and marriage. Here is Tolstoy, in a letter, testing Valeriya:

These two people with opposite inclinations have fallen in love with each other. How then can they behave to live together? First, they must make concessions to each other. Secondly, the one whose inclinations are the less moral, must make more concessions.

All his life, Tolstoy intended to be "more moral". He listed the rocks upon which his sort of marriage would founder: "the slightest *faux pas* destroys everything... coquetry... jealousy... triviality... secretiveness... idleness, a hot temper, carelessness, but the main thing, extravagance and prodigality". All of these sins - and for Tolstoy a nice dress constituted coquetry - would be imputed to Sonya. "Love" was a meaningless word to him. "You know my nasty, suspicious changeable character, and God knows if there is anything that could alter it. Perhaps strong love which I have never felt, and in which I do not believe."

Unlike Valeriya, Sonya was not spared the shock of Tolstoy's premarital diaries, in which she read of his affairs with married women in society, the long list of gypsy or semi-gypsy couplings, the news that he had fathered a child by the wife of one of his sons (absent on military service), the fact that he had suffered bouts of venereal disease. Sonya, after twenty-four hours, threw them back at him, apparently understood and forgave, and went to the altar. But she was never to forget these revelations. The whole of my husband's past is so dreadful that I don't think I will ever be able to accept it.

The story of Sonya's married life became the weighing of successive disillusionments against her wild and undoubted happiness, which lasted on and off until the 1880s. Certainly Sonya was to be disappointed in the bedroom. Tolstoy's rules were simple and inflexible. You did not make love to a pregnant wife, not to one breast-feeding. You did not practise birth control, nor encourage your wife to do so. It is possible that Sonya's fear of pregnancy may have made her frigid. Anne Edwards claims that Sonya, especially after the age of forty, had unsatisfied needs an impatient Tolstoy would

not humour. Who knows? Sonya has really told us all we need to know herself: "I so often long for spiritual intimacy with Lev, not just this disgusting bodily intimacy"; "the physical side of love played a great part within him - for me on the contrary that is nothing."

Sonya suffered from brooding, hot-tempered jealousy, exacerbated by the appearance of Tolstoy's former mistress, the "fat, pasty and horrible" Aksinya at Yasnaya Polyana within weeks of Sonya first becoming pregnant. At her side gambolled Timofei, Tolstoy's bastard. Sonya exclaimed in fury and disgust: "If I could kill him and then make another man exactly like him, then I would do it joyfully."

In old age, Tolstoy described how the "great tragedy since all time" - besides which earthquakes, disease and the anxieties of men were nothing - "was the tragedy of the bedroom". There his reconciliations with Sonya would take place in what he called the "sham cement of kisses", or even more cruelly, "ceremonial lust" and "domesticated prostitution". How could any woman deal with a husband who thought that "a sound healthy woman is a wild beast"?

Each of the shifts in Tolstoy's self-centred search for his God, and as the obverse side, his obsession with the riddle of death, was a nail in the coffin of the marriage. In losing Tolstoy, Sonya had to fall back on her children and grandchildren as unsatisfactory substitutes for a great passion. In 1869, he underwent "the crisis of Arzamas" when he thought death had threatened him. In 1870, he later recalled, "the cord has snapped... and I realised my loneliness". In 1870 - 71, he suffered a major breakdown after completing *War and Peace*, which neither Greek nor Schopenhauer nor Hegel nor the Fascist Father could heal. By 1876, death threatened to strike down three of his children, and his two favourite sons, his bookish family; at Yasnaya Polyana. By 1877, he was seeking his faith in the hitherto rejected consolations of the Orthodox Church (Gorky called his search for God the strange grappling of "two bears in the same lair"). In 1882, when Sonya insisted on an establishment in Moscow appropriate to their rank and suitable for the education of the children, he denounced her life as "empty, deceitful and sumptuous". He himself went off to study prostitution, poverty and starvation in the Moscow slums. By 1882, Sonya could write in her diary: "I am sitting up in the night weeping over the loss of my love". In 1883, he first met Chertkov, who was to take Sonya's place as his "nearest friend"

هكذا في الأصل

The quest of a Born and Die Baby

By D. A. N. Jones

AMON TUTUOLA:

The Witch-Herbalist of the Remote Town
265pp. Faber. £6.50 (paperback, £2.95).
0 571 11703 1

Anyone who enjoys Nigerian writing in English must salute Amon Tutuola, the man who made the breakthrough in 1952 with *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. It is appropriate that the founder of a literature should be a working-class man, an early school-leaver, making poetic use of the idioms of the unlettered. Tutuola was like a seventeenth-century Welshman who had just discovered the sweetness of the English tongue. *The Witch-Herbalist of the Remote Town* is his first novel for fourteen years: his English, though not as wild as it once was, still has a flavour of the early school-leaver, a newcomer to the language. The very title shows it. No Englishman would lay such stress on the dull word "remote"; but for Tutuola it has a resonance. "Witch-Herbalist" must be his own coinage. There are people in Nigeria whom our imperial ancestors might vaguely have called witches or witch-finders or witch-doctors, without making much distinction: the polite word for them, nowadays, is "native herbalists". Tutuola has linked these concepts in a characteristic *zeugma*.

The story he tells is about a quest. His hero has a barren wife and must make a long journey through a moon-haunted bush, to get a fertility potion from the Witch-Herbalist. On

his return, he is so thirsty that he drinks some himself, despite the Witch-Herbalist's warning. Thus, both the husband and wife give birth to children. Perhaps the story of Orpheus in the underworld has worked on Tutuola's imagination. No one can be certain of his sources.

When I taught, in the 1960s, in a Nigerian girls' school, I noticed in Tutuola's popular book, *Simbi and the Sayer of the Dark Jungle* (and who else would *zeugmatize* a Greek myth with the Nigerian bush?), a story that reminded me of the myth of Perseus; so, I asked my pupils if he was adapting an old African legend. "No," they said. "He got it from *Latin for Today, Part I*." Tutuola is certainly always glad to use the ancient legends of Europe, Greco-Roman or Judeo-Christian; but he is perhaps at his most powerful when working with African mythology. The most haunting chapter in *The Witch-Herbalist* derives from the Yoruba concept of the *abiku*.

"An *abiku* is something like a 'changeling'—a child that belongs in the spirit-world, in a sort of Elfland. He is born, is loved and petted, and then he dies, going back to his spirit companions in the bush. The next time his mother conceives, she may recognize the same spirit in a new little body. This one too may die, and then the next . . . These babies are all the same *abiku* and strong magic is needed to keep them on this earth. There are several Nigerian poems, in English, about *abiku*. Wole Soyinka in his memoir, *Akè* (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), tells of a little girl he knew in his boyhood; she was believed to be an *abiku*. She might be called by the

spirits at any time. 'Amulets, bangles, tiny rattles and dark copper-twist rings *earled* her', writes Soyinka. 'The two tiny cicatrices on her face were also part of the many countenances to entice them by her companions in the other world. Like all *abiku* she was privileged, apart. Her parents dared not scold her for long or earnestly.'

We wonder what it is like, this "other world", this Elfland of the *abiku*. Tutuola tells us in the chapter called "The Town of the Born and Die Baby". His hero eats strange fruit; on his way to the Remote Town, he lies down and sees his stomach open — and sees himself emerge from his adult body in the form of a baby. Now he is that baby and he looks back on his lifeless adult body with dislike as he marches to the mystic town, where he has long been awaited. He was, he explains, born as an *abiku*, a "Born and Die Baby", but the spirits had never got him because "his father had tied him down with a powerful juju". By eating that strange fruit he has reversed the spell — and now he is in a spirit-world where the other *abiku* disdain him, thinking him a coward for not dying before and joining them as he was meant to. He has to prove his courage before they will let him resume adult shape and continue his dutiful quest in search of fertility.

This episode has a peculiar magic, since it harmonizes with the whole theme of the quest, expressing that passionate need for children which is so natural in sane societies. The weird division of the hero — now a philoprogenitive adult, now a death-desiring baby — prepares us for the final chapter, when he finds that his

various personalities have come to life before his eyes and are holding a court of enquiry into his behaviour. For the hero has several personalities: there is his first mind, his second mind, his memory and (more mysterious) his "Supreme Second". They have accompanied him throughout his journey, like Dorothy's companions in *The Wizard of Oz*. First Mind has usually been timorous, Second Mind not much less so. Memory has sometimes been useful, sometimes over-prudent: only the "Supreme Second" has been a consistent protector and ally.

If a European had imagined this extraordinary court of enquiry, he might have populated it with Ego, Id and Superego, with inferiority Complex and Collective Unconscious — for everyone needs to personify his personalities, and Viennese mythology is as good as any for most poetic

purposes. A European equivalent for the "Supreme Second" may be found, perhaps, in R. M. Hare's new book, *Moral Thinking*, in which Hare imagines, sitting above our memories and our teachers' precepts, an archangel in each man's head attempting thoughtful and courageous moral decisions. However, Tutuola is not "doing philosophy" — nor psychology; he is writing a fiery tale, and all ends happily.

So I ate and drank to my satisfaction as the people of the town were still beating the drums, singing, dancing, eating and drinking about the town . . . The old people told my wife to bring her baby to the front of the house and in front of the two-headed spear which I had pegged to the ground, they blessed the baby and, after the whole of them returned to their houses, with hilarity which could not be described.

Making their way

By Peter Lewis

ELAINE FEINSTEIN:

The Survivors
317pp. Hutchinson. £7.95.
0 09 145850 1

Some novelists write the same book over and over again; others spring surprises with every new book they produce, so that in the end they would only surprise us by repeating themselves. Coming in the wake of *The Ecstasy of Dr Miriam Garner* and *The Shadow Master*, Elaine Feinstein's new novel, *The Survivors*, indicates that she is well on the way to being a writer of infinite variety. Critics of her early novels who saw in them a strictly limited though distinguished talent, and Feinstein as a refined poet-novelist, the ultra-sensitive writer of exquisite and delicately shaded prose, should now take to word-eating.

After adventures in the paranoid of the Murdoch-influenced *The Ecstasy of Dr Miriam Garner*, and the apocalyptic fustian of legend with international politics in *The Shadow Master*, Feinstein has now attempted a realistic novel of the family-saga type, encompassing three generations. *The Survivors* is about two Jewish families from Liverpool who have very little in common except their Jewishness, and the fact that the heads of the families at the opening of the novel, Solomon Gordon and Abram Katz, emigrated from Odessa at the turn of the century to escape the institutionalized antisemitism of Tsarist Russia. The Gordons are extremely well-to-do and middle-class, and have been assimilated to a considerable extent into English society. The Katz family is working class, belongs to the Liverpool equivalent of a ghetto (within a slum area), and is orthodox in religion.

Although the novel is divided into four sections, marked by dates (February 1914, October 1920, March 1934, 1956), the narrative unfolds continuously over about sixty years against a background of European history from shortly before the First World War until the 1970s. The lengths of the sections, which grow progressively shorter, are approximately in inverse proportion to the time-spans covered, so that the long first section, occupying more than the third of the book, deals only with the 1914-1918 period. By alternating between the two families during this time-span, Feinstein creates a wide range of characters representative of two entirely different ways of life. The two families come into contact only briefly, at a military hospital where Solomon Gordon's rebellious daughter Dorothy nurses the wounded soldier Len, one of the Katz family.

After this first section the narrative moves forward more rapidly and more selectively; the focus shifts from one individual to another so that some characters drop out of

view for long stretches, to be picked up years later. The second section, covering the 1920s and early 1930s, brings the two families together through the surprising marriage of two members of the second generation, Benji Katz and Betty Gordon, but much of it follows the fortunes of the emancipated Dorothy who curves out a career for herself, and the Cambridge-educated Francis who becomes a successful publisher.

In the third section, covering the period from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s, the themes of politics and antisemitism become much more prominent, with the rise of Nazism experienced at first-hand by Francis on a business trip to Germany; the activities of Mosley's blackshirts, and the Second World War. Two members of the third generation also come into prominence here, Francis's sophisticated daughter Kitty, who goes to Oxford to read English, and Betty's much less refined daughter Diana, who is nevertheless stimulated by Kitty's achievement to follow her example, and wins a scholarship to Cambridge. It is Diana who dominates the final section as she makes her way, first through her undergraduate and postgraduate studies and then through the phoney liberalism of the Swinging Sixties, resisting the lure of what she recognizes to be the crypto-fascism of the student movement. After re-defining her Jewishness at the time of the Eichmann trial, she achieves personal integrity even though her marriage to a non-Jewish poet finally crumbles. She increasingly seems to resemble her aunt, Dorothy, and it is appropriate that, after a number of deaths in both families, the novel should end with Dorothy herself, an archetypal survivor.

The note about Feinstein on the jacket points out that she was born in Bootle, brought up in Leicester, and studied in Cambridge. All three places feature prominently in the novel, and it seems probable that she has transmuted her family and personal history into fiction in *The Survivors*, which is full of insights into the changing patterns of Jewish life during this century. Yet in spite of the comprehensive sweep that the form of the family saga permits, *The Survivors* is more satisfactory in its parts than as a whole. The episodes concentrating on the independent women, Dorothy and Diana, are particularly good, but even here the speed with which the narrative moves tends to preclude depth of understanding. At times, Feinstein seems to be trying to put a pallid, into a pint glass. Ever since Lawrence revolutionized the family novel, serious purposes and nowadays, especially romantic fiction, Feinstein has made a gallant attempt to redress the balance, but in doing so she has sacrificed the more imaginative and even fantastic qualities of her recent fiction for pedestrian realism.

Atlantic approaches

By Victor Rothwell

TERRY H. ANDERSON:

The United States, Great Britain, and the Cold War 1944-47
256pp. University of Missouri Press.
£10.80
0 8262 0328 0

By beginning his book in 1944 Terry H. Anderson is able to show how the Anglophobe sentiments which had been widespread in the United States since the War of Independence and which partnership against Hitler had until then done little to diminish, were within the space of three years to be largely superseded by fear of communism and the Soviet Union. By 1947 the traditional American antipathy to British imperialism had so far waned that, as the British ambassador in Washington wryly noted, sections of the United States press were complaining that Britain was proceeding too fast with de-colonization.

While he is mainly concerned with the interacting roles of the United States and Britain in the approach to the Cold War, Professor Anderson observes several times that Britain did not succeed in "guiding" the United States towards a policy of resisting further Soviet expansion, though he thinks that British leaders tried to do so. It was American perceptions of the Soviet threat which defeated the renewed isolationist impulse evoked in the United States in 1945 and 1946, and not British skill in discussions with important Americans or in propaganda to the American people.

In so far as Britain helped in this process, it was through American awareness of the immense value, strategically and economically, once the British economy had got over the worst of its weaknesses with American aid, of Britain and its Common-

wealth and colonies as a reliable junior partner in world affairs.

Anderson's sensitive feeling for this aspect makes for a well-rounded picture of American foreign policy in those years. One of the most interesting features for the student of British foreign policy is to be reminded of just how volatile was the public mood in the United States, as measured by opinions polls and by election results, as well as by letters to Congress and the White House. Only 25 per cent of Americans polled immediately after Churchill's Fulton speech in March 1946 supported his remarks, and Truman was dismayed by the deluge of hostile letters about the speech which his office received. Yet two months later 83 per cent of Americans were recorded as being in favour of the former Prime Minister's call for extreme vigilance against further Soviet expansion.

In November 1946 the American people elected a Republican Congress committed to massive cuts in public expenditure, including defence appropriations and funds for overseas relief. Yet this was the Congress which was to approve Marshall Aid and American rearmament. Foreign Office officials frequently described American public opinion as being utterly fickle, and had reservations about making British security heavily dependent on such a country if there were alternatives, especially given that, as they saw it, the American political system made administrations, no matter how enlightened themselves, much more susceptible to shifts in public opinion than their British counterparts.

The book does not really succeed on its British side. This is primarily because of the distortions which so often stem from largely ignoring all but one of a number of closely related themes. In this case the omissions, except for passing references, are British-Soviet bilateral relations and British interest in setting up a

The politics of decline

By Alan Angell

M. H. J. FINCH:

A Political Economy of Uruguay Since 1870
339pp. Macmillan. £20.
0 333 27852 6

The dust-jacket of this book shows a terrified civilian covering on the ground surrounded by a half-dozen or so heavily armed soldiers or policemen. This may seem an odd illustration for a study in the realm of political economy, but it is sadly only too appropriate. Henry Finch's argument is that the Uruguayan economy developed such structural rigidities, and that the prevailing political system was so incapable of doing more than distribute rapidly dwindling patronage, that only a simultaneous restructuring of both the political and economic systems could break the deadlock. The tragedy is that the path chosen was a combination of brutal repression and, in theory at least, free-market economics which the likely outcome will simply intensify those factors which gave rise to the original crisis.

The author's attempt to provide a coherent conceptual guide to the politics of decline, from a well-organized welfare state to a stagnant, corrupt one and finally to the present authoritarianism, does not work as well as his excellent account of the economy. Poulantzas's theory of the state is invoked to explain the workings of a political system relatively independent of the economically dominant agrarian sector. Fortunately, this idea is not pursued too relentlessly for it raises as many, if not more, questions than it answers. How relative? How autonomous? At times the landowners appear as politically weak (because they commanded fewer votes than urban interests) and at other times as not so much weak as

misdirecting their political strength towards short-term economic objectives instead of taking a long-term view of the low and declining output of the largely pastoral economy.

In the end, Finch's "relative autonomy" thesis seems to amount to little more than the proposition that the link between economic influence and political power is indirect and complex. If undeniable, dealing with the military regime since 1973 he sees the armed forces as a higher servant of the interests of capital than the various capitalist groups themselves (farmers, bankers and industrialists), because it is the one group capable of taking a long-term and detached view. No doubt the armed forces themselves would accept this as long as the interests of capital were also identified with those of the nation. But the author's analysis makes it fairly plain that there is very little likelihood of their strategy working; his concluding words are that "the irony of [the military's] economic model is that in attempting to secure the possible advantages of a deepened form of dependency it seems likely to achieve only an accentuation of the economy's vulnerability."

This surely contradicts part of his earlier analysis. If the system broke down because dominant economic groups lacked political power, and because they took a short-sighted view of policy-making, why does it not work now that a group possesses absolute power and is able to take a long-term view? This is a question that Finch does not answer. The Uruguayan military, but similar regimes in Chile and Brazil, and to a lesser extent those of Peru (where they have given up trying to answer the question) and Argentina (where they hold on to political power far less certain).

Any attempt to understand the present crisis of authoritarianism in Latin America must rest heavily on an account of recent economic development, and here Finch has provided a stimulating analysis that is provocative and the product of admirably painstaking research. By

West European security group (there was a policy decision not to use the word "bloc") without American membership. Anderson sees British foreign-policy-makers as unambiguously convinced of Soviet ill-will and hostility from the time in March 1945 when it became clear that Stalin had no intention of genuinely implementing the Yalta agreement on Poland. From then on it was simply a case of offering Britain's services to Washington as a staunch ally in the containment of communist expansion.

Only Churchill's attitude during his last months as Prime Minister really fitted this description. Otherwise it oversimplifies British policy towards the United States and the Soviet Union both before and after the speedy Soviet betrayal of the spirit of the agreement on Poland and even the letter of its companion, the Declaration on Liberated Europe, which provided for consultations between the three major powers in the rest of liberated Europe before one whose troops were in occupation of any particular area made major political changes there. The Soviet Union's unilateral installation of a new government in Romania in March 1945 was obviously incompatible with the Declaration.

These events did not come as a great surprise to most of those concerned with the making of British foreign policy. During the war they had not been totally unaffected by the tendency towards uncritical admiration of the Soviet Union which existed among much of the British public. However, they were resigned to Russian demands for a sphere of influence in most of Eastern Europe, and Churchill himself had attempted such an agreement with Stalin in Moscow in October 1944. They also thought that the anti-communist Poles had facilitated their own downfall by spurning British efforts to mediate between them

and Stalin while Russia was still hard-pressed to keep up the momentum of its war effort. As the war ended, the attitude among officials remained one of suspended judgment about Stalin's eventual intentions.

After the war, Bevin, virtually the autocrat of British foreign policy under the new Labour Government, continued to hope for a restoration of cordial relations with the Soviet Union until late in 1947 on the basis of the Russians, confining themselves to the area of the Red Army's wartime conquests, excluding the Soviet zones of Germany and Austria which would be incorporated into permanently disarmed and decentralized German and Austrian states. His occasional tirades, such as that against Vyshinsky, the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, at the special session of the United Nations Security Council in London early in 1946, must be set against a number of public and private olive branches to Stalin which were the despair of some of his own officials, especially when they threatened to delay Anglo-American cooperation to relieve the desperate economic plight of western Germany, with its immensely burdensome reparations. While acknowledging that a Western European group of Britain, France and the smaller democratic countries (and perhaps also Portugal but not Spain) would be a second-best to a United States guarantee of Western European security, Bevin and his officials until 1948 remained deeply

Under pressure

By Esmond Wright

GRAHAM K. WILSON:

Interest Groups in the United States 161pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £12.95 (paperback, £4.95).
0 19 827425 4

Ever since the foundation of the Republic, interest groups have been held to be a major feature of, and a major threat to, the American democratic system. Indeed, the best-known essay in *The Federalist Papers* of 1788, essay number ten, is a standard indictment of what Madison called "faction", and he went on to rest his own constitution on a balancing off of one group or class or interest against another, an intricate device and carefully overlapping system guaranteeing that force would offset force, and that ambition would counter ambition. Reinforced by the weakness of the party-system and by the impugning of racial and linguistic groups, pluralism has from that time on been held to be the norm in American democracy. Lobbies and interest groups in so open, and so ungoverned a society have been accepted as inevitable. Almost every American text-book on government has its chapter on pressure or interest groups.

Graham Wilson is thus working a well-trodden field. But his book, though it runs to only 150 pages, is thoroughly researched, well-written, and fresh in its conclusions. His thesis is that such a pattern of vigorous lobbies has actually only recently come into existence. Until now the many groups, however representative of interests or sections, have in fact been weak and poorly organized. The majority of companies, even the largest of them, made little contact with Congress at all. The big and powerful lobbies of an earlier day — the NAM, the Chamber of Commerce, the AFA, the AFE-CIO — have become conservative and were always or nearly always on the side of the status quo.

The technical expertise of all the major business groups has now, however, been improved beyond recognition, and political action committees channel campaign funds to their friends — in 1978 there were over 750 of them — created by companies supplying funds equivalent to 15 per cent of all campaign contributions. Not to be outdone, the AFL-CIO's

Committee on Political Education (COPE) is now formidable: in the 1976 election it provided 120,000 volunteers, 20,000 telephones and a computer system that gave to the candidates it endorsed the names and addresses of 11 million union members. As power in the Congress has become diffused, "amateur" laws have opened committee hearings to public scrutiny, as the increase in the number of primaries has made interest groups more important to candidates, the number and skill of lobbyists and lobbies have steadily increased. Concern with pollution and the environment, Watergate, Common Cause and Ralph Nader's Public Citizen Foundation all testify to the value of public policy bodies and of single interest crusades. They have operated on Congressmen almost irrespective of party-label. All have had direct access anyway to branches of the Executive as well as to Congress, and the Executive has responded, with a revived Federal Trade Commission, and newly created agencies (the Federal Elections Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration). There is a daunting sophistication and there is now a genuine pluralism at work.

Up-to-date as it is, the book is nevertheless a product of the Jimmy Carter world; and an epilogue on the impact of the Reagan victory of 1980 would have been interesting and revealing. A table or two giving a list of the top lobbying groups and their expenditures would also have been valuable, and not difficult to compile from the Congressional Quarterly Service. There are interesting references to the ITT's involvement in Chile, but some areas of lobbying are totally ignored: a study of a model drawn — for instance — from the part played by lobbies in securing the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, or the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, would have strengthened this survey. By revealing the process as "amateur" rather than opposing it, not only is the cause of Civil Rights ignored but so are professional groups like the American Bar Association or the AMA and Medichare, and the British reader inevitably looks for a final chapter comparing the British and American systems.

In asking for more, however, one is but paying a tribute to the quality of Dr Wilson's study. This is an excellent and concise survey of a vast and complex field.

Parallels and influences

By Christopher Hill

HUGH M. RICHMOND:
Puritans and Libertines
Anglo-French Literary Relations in
the Reformation
401pp. University of California
Press. £19.25
0 520 04179 8

Hugh M. Richmond's book has been a labour of love, the product of many years' intensive study of sixteenth-century French literature and its influences on England. His thesis is that "the great literature of Renaissance France evolved under the pressures of intense adversary relations generated by religious controversy, and that English literature profited from the exciting new distortions of behaviour, ideas, values and personality which resulted". He believes that Italian - and especially Petrarchan - influences on sixteenth-century English literature have been overestimated, and argues that French influences were of more direct significance. This is a heavily corrective, though Richmond possibly exaggerates the continuing hold of the Italian thesis in English criticism.

He starts by stressing the influence of Marguerite de Navarre and her *Heptameron*. Anne Boleyn had been educated at the court of Navarre, and part of her attraction for Henry VIII and his court derived from her introduction to England of this sophisticated French culture which she knew so well. It was a culture which allowed unusual intellectual and sexual freedom to ladies. In particular Queen Anne exercised a strong influence over Sir Thomas Wyatt, and through his poetry the new culture entered the main stream of English literature. "Wyatt is a memorable poet for exactly the opposite reason to that usually alleged: not because he imported Petrarch into England but because he showed the irrelevance of Petrarchian conventions to the great

amatory issues of his life and society, even if he found himself trapped within that archaic frame."

Richmond also interestingly emphasizes "the new range of psychological awareness in part opened by the shattering impact of the Reformation. The Reformation 'undercut the seriousness of traditional metaphysics' and 'restored psychological discontinuity as a proper approach to the human mind's propensity to failure and potentiality for unpredictable grace'. But the Reformation did not happen only - or even chiefly - in France. Richmond does not appear to have read A. G. Dickens's demonstration of the deep Lollard roots of puritanism and libertinism in England. He attributes much to specific French influences that might equally well derive from a common pool of protestant ideas to which English, Dutch and Platinate thinkers contributed no less than French. It is indeed important to stress the break in sensibility that the Reformation made, but protestantism was not a unique phenomenon. The new geographical discoveries, had no less deep-reaching consequences. More's *Utopia* was not a protestant document, but it opened up new ranges of possibility to the imagination. So, in a different way, did Machiavelli. Richmond does not mention Hiram Haydn's trail-blazing *The Counter-Reformation* of 1950, though some of the historical works on which he relies are even more dated.

Richmond is at his most interesting when discussing his chosen French authors and works, particularly the *Heptameron*, Marot, Ronsard and D'Aubigné, whose influence it is good to see recognized. His book would be worth reading for these chapters alone. He suggests parallels between Ronsard and Jonson (who mentioned Ronsard) and on Donne, George Herbert, Milton and Marvell are a good deal more speculative. Indeed his search for parallels and influences seems to be less and less convincing as he advances in time from Wyatt,

Of course, if you are as well read in sixteenth-century French literature as Professor Richmond is and you look for French sources for everything that Shakespeare wrote, you will find a number of possible parallels. But is it really necessary to suppose that Shakespeare went to the *Heptameron* for the idea that "the better to be vile than vile esteemed" or for "They that have power to hurt and will do none... They lightly do inherit Heaven's graces"? Or that Pyramus and Thisbe - a *Midastrum* or *Night's Dream* - arise from Marot? Nor is it really very illuminating, when Poincarné's staff with eating meat on a Friday, to recall that a similar accusation was made against Marot. Again, what are we to make of the statement that "without the self-assertion of Marot and Ronsard in the face of their opponents, Donne and Milton would have lacked precedents for their own self-development"? Or that the last, sardonic phase of Shakespeare's sonnets, "dealing with the Dark Lady, also probably depends directly on the *Heptameron*"? "Shakespeare's own awareness" in writing *Othello* "was probably heightened by a sympathetic discussion of wife-murder" in the *Heptameron* but to claim that its author's "consistent suspicion of masks and makeup is a plausible source for Shakespeare's own frequent association of them with viciousness, sensuality, or at least ominous passion" suggests that Shakespeare was incapable of observing his own society.

It is, again, a plausible suggestion that Marguerite de Navarre's court, and Marot's praise of dark beauties, "did a great deal to establish" an "alternative feminine ideal", but it is less plausible to look forward from them to "the dusky beauty of the sardonic Rosaline" in *Love's Labour Lost*. Nevertheless, Richmond's chapter on *Love's Labour Lost* is useful. It relates the play closely to French political events. Like many of his points, this is perhaps not so original as he claims, but it is well worked out, in some detail. But is it evidence of French cultural influence? The English public was pas-

sionately interested in Henry of Navarre and the cause of the French Huguenots at the time support for Solidarity in England today could hardly be used to demonstrate Polish cultural influences.

The case is similar with Milton and Marvell. That Milton had read Du Bartas and Marvell Saint-Amant is well established: no doubt they read other seventeenth-century French poets. But the tracking of parallels, though an interesting scholarly exercise, tells us nothing about the origins of some poets' ideas. It is as impossible to prove as to disprove that "the complex authorial personae in *Paradise Lost* and *Upon Appleton House* owe a great deal to the defensive tactics developed by Marot, Ronsard, D'Aubigné and Théophile in the course of protracted religious, political and amatory controversies: they are introverted, self-sufficient, and increasingly quietist" (though one might query whether either Milton or Marvell became "increasingly quietist"). Milton hardly needed to read Marot to learn about the ecclesiastical abuses he denounced in *Lycidas*. By the time Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*, over a century of European protestant thinking was at his disposal, much of it in English. French influences were very subsidiary.

Hugh Richmond suggests interesting analogies between D'Aubigné's and Milton's epics. But need we postulate direct influence? As Judith Sproston persuasively argues in the current *Journal of European Studies*, both poets were protestants seeking to explain the defeat of a cause they believed to be God's. It would have been astonishing if similar causes had not produced similar effects.

There is an interesting, if rather slight, chapter on seventeenth-century French libertines - Théophile de Viau, Jacques Vallée des Barreaux. Richmond may or may not need to trace their influence on Suckling and Waller. But Marvell did not need to read French libertines to get the idea that "all comes by nature". He could

have found it closer to hand in English radicals who were free to publish in the 1640s and 1650s ideas which had certainly circulated earlier. An example in Sir Walter Raleigh's case. There is as little need to seek French sources, French or other, for Marot's sense of the existence of imperious "heaven's flame", "the force of any contemporaries he got that from a firsthand experience of living through a revolution. The *carpe diem* which underlies "To his coy mistress" can be found in Ronsard and Du Barreaux, as it can be found in some of other poets. But the twist which Marvell gives to this traditional theme is his own.

Nevertheless the book is well worth reading. It will tell students of sixteenth-century English literature and that they did not know about French literature, and will perhaps lead to the discarding of some hoary truisms. The chapter on Anne Boleyn's influence on Wyatt is important. Professor Richmond's emphasis on the psychological consequences of the Reformation for literature is stimulating and worth thinking about. I myself feel that his focus is too narrow: he says very little about Montaigne, for instance, though his influence on sixteenth-century English literature was arguably greater than that of any of the figures Richmond studies.

If the book makes students of English literature more aware of French influences, it will not have been written in vain. Richmond's demonstration of ways in which sixteenth-century French poets broke through to new areas of sensibility is valuable. But in the last resort monochromatic literary history is an unhelpful as any other kind of monochromatic history. Books seem important to scholars, but poets did not live in libraries. Shakespeare, Milton and Marvell experienced their own wars, and helped to make the politics of their day. In literature, at least, environment is more important than inheritance.

Transforming the obvious

By J. B. Donne

SUSAN VOGEL (Editor):
For Spirits and Kings
African Art from the Tishman Collection

160pp with 42 colour plates and 217 black-and-white illustrations. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art (distributed by Harry N. Abrams Inc). \$14.94.
0 87099 267 8

It is debatable whether we are yet in a position to discuss the "history" of African art. The term itself, derived as it is from the European classical tradition, is open to dispute when used in an African context. The generic concept of "art" does not come naturally to African ways of thought, and those figure-carvings and masks that are so highly and justly admired as works of art in private and public collections throughout the rest of the world may well have an amoral or social or ritual significance in their African setting which transcends by far their aesthetic appeal. Africans prefer to express their artistic sensibilities in the appreciation of woven cloth, a piece of jewellery, pottery, or a carved stool, all of which we tend to thrust higgledy-piggledy into the rag-bag of "minor arts".

Any study of African art soon runs into the quicksands of uncertainty where archaeologists and historians are still undecided about such fundamental problems as the introduction of the Iron Age and the directions of Bantu dispersion. Even in Nigeria, where an enormous amount of fieldwork has been carried out, the proposed line of continuity from the Nok Culture (5th century BC to 2nd century AD), through Ife (10th-15th centuries) and Benin (15th century or earlier; to 1897), down to the traditional Yoruba carvings still

being produced today, is highly speculative. Moreover, the technically superb and wonderfully intricate bronze work in a completely individual style found at Igbo-Ukwu, a hundred miles east of Benin, and dated between the 8th and 10th centuries, awkwardly intrudes into the gap of a thousand years and several hundred miles which separate Nok from Ife.

Only in the past twenty-five years have art historians, especially in North America, concentrated their studies on Africa. In 1957, Roy Sieber, now doyen of African art history in the United States, presented his doctoral thesis on "African tribal sculpture", the following year, William Fagg, then Deputy Keeper of the Department of Ethnography at the British Museum, published his monumental *Sculpture of Africa*, which renewed and revitalized the study of the subject. At about this time, in New York, Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller opened his own collection to the public by founding the Museum of Primitive Art on West 54th Street, with the art historian, Robert Goldwater, as its first Director.

It was in the late 1950s, too, that Paul Tishman's interests as a collector turned from Pre-Columbian and modern art towards Africa. His earliest acquisitions were an ivory lady-in-waiting and a bronze helmet mask for the Odoia tribe, both from the city of Benin. Since then, with the guidance particularly of Roy Sieber and William Fagg, he has greatly extended the collection while maintaining its extremely high quality. In 1966, a selection of 133 pieces merited an exhibition at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. This was followed by further exhibitions in Jerusalem and many cities in the United States, culminating recently in a display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art of 150 pieces selected from a total of some 350 in the collection. Of these, sixty are attributed in the catalogue

to Nigeria, reflecting the expertise of Tishman's principal advisers, *For Spirits and Kings*, edited by Susan Vogel, Curator of the African Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, illustrates all 150 works, sometimes accompanied by field photographs, with comments from some seventy of the world's experts on particular areas. These include half-a-dozen Africans, while the rest are drawn almost equally from Europe and North America.



Yoruba staff, a carving from Angola. From the book reviewed here.

The exhibition and its catalogue therefore reflect, on the one hand the present fashions in African art, and on the other the present state of scholarly interest and knowledge. The geographical range is impressive, though concentrated in West and Central Africa. North Africa is omitted completely, as it is to be expected in a collection of mainly figure sculpture and masks (though some rare and perhaps not very appealing masks are to be found north of the Sahara). East and Southern Africa are represented by an important grave figure from the Malagasy Republic, a fine stone-figure attributed to Great Zimbabwe, and a rather

typical but delightful Nguni figure from Natal.

The sheer quality, almost without exception, of the individual pieces in the collection is overwhelming, and is a tribute to Tishman's personal taste and to his judicious use of expertise. To take the example of Baule and Senufo carving, where the studied beauty of the one and the often soft lines of the other make too immediate an appeal to the eye, he has chosen pieces in which the simplicity and severity of form and the stripping of a style to its essentials transform the obvious into perfection.

The classical styles of court art appear to predominate over the more fantastic objects that in the past appealed to artists and collectors alike. But there are some exhilarating new discoveries. The great if gruesome life-size statue from the Cameroonian Grasslands of a seated king returned from battle, with his sword in one hand and a human head in the other, is probably unique. A fine small figure of an executioner in a similar pose comes from the Fon of the Benin Republic (formerly Dahomey), among whom such excellence is a rarity. An Asante maternity figure is a superb example of what in itself is a common enough subject. The famous names appear - Dogon and Benin and Yoruba, Fang, Kota, Kongo and Luba - but so do those of the lesser known Bassa, Attie, Urhobo, Tiv, Tsogo and Wongo.

In the present situation, where generalizations are likely to be so quickly overturned by new data, extended captions attached to a body of photographs based on an exhibition provide a most useful and practical method of publishing and disseminating recent findings. But the idea of inviting some seventy experts to present their knowledge and opinions of individual masterpieces (and on occasion one piece is discussed by

two experts) is both novel and fruitful, although the rewards vary considerably depending not only on the investigator's own interests, but also on what can and what cannot any longer be found out. In the case of Yoruba sculpture, studies are continuing in the attribution of pieces to particular hands and the rediscovery of the families and individual names of carvers. Much work, too, is being done to reveal the mythology behind the iconography of Yoruba art. With regard to the Senufo, the meaning of the indigenous terms used by the masking societies, so often misunderstood and therefore misapplied up to now, is at last being clarified. But the contributors to *For Spirits and Kings* also indicate the limitations of present knowledge: the expert who has here attributed the figure of a European (no 86) to the Ijo of Southern Nigeria has since stated that it might be ascribed to the Bijo of the Bissagos Islands, over 1,500 miles away. Such academic honesty is welcome, following the wider assertions and interpretations presented in the past.

When a collection is devoted almost entirely to the plastic arts (there is one piece of Kuba raffia cloth among the selection), it may seem inconsequent to point to the apparent lack of interest in other arts. But this seems to typify a trend among many collectors, who have not yet responded to the recent excellent scholarly publications and museum exhibitions devoted, for example, to African textiles and metalwork. The exhibition catalogue has therefore to exclude these fields, although several of the contributors have done most important work in these over the past decade. Despite this limitation, *For Spirits and Kings* serves as a valuable interim report on the present state of African art studies, as well as providing an important fund of new and detailed information which will greatly add to the general body of knowledge.

Actaeon and Ixion

By Terence Cave

GISELE MATHIEU-CASTELLANI:
Mythes de l'ère baroque
255pp. Paris: Presses Universitaires
de France. 13 036635-X

DAVID LEE RUBIN:
The Knot of Actaeon
A Poetic of the French Lyric in the
Early 17th Century
109pp. Columbus: Ohio State University Press. \$11.
0 8142 0322 1

The baroque was the last of the great unexplored territories of French literature. In particular, it was the last chance for scholars to make their academic fortune by "discovering" a major poet, as Alan Bosse had discovered Sponde in the 1930s. Some twenty years ago, articles were still regularly appearing under titles such as "Un grand poète inconnu" (even, if I remember rightly, "Encore un grand poète inconnu"). In the event, however, what was discovered was that there were a large number of quite interesting minor poets writing in France between 1570 and 1630; that they were difficult to classify, being linked by no common purpose, theory, or methodology; and that the only way to make their occasional successes available to a wider public was to anthologize them: thus Gisele Mathieu-Castellani herself has recently produced a collection entitled *Le baroque* in the 10/18 series.

These two new studies present an almost exemplary contrast in their approach to what is now a moderately well mapped landscape. Gisele Mathieu-Castellani's *Mythes de l'ère baroque* is a study of the myth of Actaeon, as it is treated by French poets from the 16th to the 17th century. The book is a study of the myth of Actaeon, as it is treated by French poets from the 16th to the 17th century. The book is a study of the myth of Actaeon, as it is treated by French poets from the 16th to the 17th century.

l'ère baroque en France (1954) in that she chooses themes claimed to be characteristic of a baroque sensibility. These themes - hubris, metamorphosis, dream, and the like - are in their turn displayed by clusters of mythological figures. David Rubin on the other hand, aligning himself with the American "neo-Aristotelians" (Crane, Olson, Cleanth Brooks, Bernard Weinberg), prefers to subject a small group of poems to detailed formal analysis. Mathieu-Castellani's approach is, to use Rubin's terminology, "integrative", using individual poems and poems as examples of a dominant thematic (and even psycho-analytic) pattern; Rubin's is "differentiated". Both, however, widen the scope of their argument from time to time by listing further examples for the reader to consult (Mathieu-Castellani here has the advantage that she can refer to her own anthology).

Although neither author is primarily interested in pressing a historical argument, they are both aware that their choice of materials and their stress on common features have historical implications. Developing the conclusions of her thesis *Les thèmes amoureux dans la poésie française 1570-1600* (1975), Mathieu-Castellani sees the new wave of Petrarchism that began in the 1570s as establishing distinctive uses of myth and distinctive thematic patterns. In her view, the neo-Petrarchists understand mythology not as a language embodying pre-established moral and didactic meanings, but as a set of figures which their own poetic language can deflect and reorder ("discours sur le mythe"); thus Prometheus, "sur le mythe", and Ixion are associated with Actaeon and Ixion as personifications of *amorous* hubris and erotic temptation. These figures are shown to recur from poet to poet, expressing an individualized and obsessive experience of the world (and

Petrarchan) frustration of the lover's desire. The voyeuristic fantasies enacted by Actaeon, the conjunction of fascination and horror associated with erotic transgression in the myths of Ixion and Medusa, an implicit homosexuality towards Narcissism or specifically baroque pathology: "les mythes nous présentent à lire une angouille qui nous paraît être au centre de l'érotique baroque".

Rubin's historical hypothesis, to which he devotes his brief conclusion, is that mid-sixteenth century poets either impose a visible structure of argument or narrative on their poems, or fail totally; early seventeenth-century poets, by contrast, seem to construct their poems loosely and even incoherently, but can be shown to exploit half-hidden thematic and figurative patterns by means of which, in the end, the poem may be read as an integral whole. His initial taxonomy of forms - three types of "consecutive unity", three types of "non-consecutive unity" - leads him to distinguish between two broad categories of seventeenth-century lyric. In the first part of his study, he looks at poems by Malherbe, Saint-Amant, and Théophile de Viau, where an apparently disrupted argument is deemed by second-hand reference, in the second part, "non-consecutive" lyrics by Maynard, Sgawne, and Théophile are similarly tested for disguised modes of unity. Rubin thus attempts to go beyond the claims, put forward by Odette de Mourgues and others, that baroque form is characteristically wayward and disorienting.

One can immediately think of objections to the historical aspects of both accounts. Ronsard's poems on Actaeon, Prometheus, Ixion, and Medusa, on dream and metamorphosis, would seem to anticipate

many of Mathieu-Castellani's "baroque" anxieties and obsessions. She claims, for instance, that "valors que les ronsardisants s'attachaient à décrire la déception et la 'vergonne' du rêveur lorsqu'il se réveille il s'aperçoit que le songe est mensonge, les poètes baroques se soumettent à la fascination onirique..."; but the stress on disillusionment and deception is characteristic rather of Ronsard's *Sonnets pour Hélène*, written during the first wave of neo-Petrarchism, than of his early *Amours*, in which the pleasures of the dream prevail. She is also unable to give a satisfactory account of the difference between the erotic taste embodied in the mid-sixteenth century cult of Diana and parallel features of neo-Petrarchism (it is ironic that the picture chosen for the cover of her anthology is Bronzino's "Venus, Cupid, Pity, and Time", a painting executed in the first half of the sixteenth century and presented to François Ier). Rubin, for his part, could be accused of ignoring Ronsard's longer lyric poems, which might have rendered examples of "two-level coherence": indeed, the ode as a genre is characterized by a combination of disjunctive argument and associative thematic patterning, so that a more detailed demonstration of the specific character of seventeenth-century lyric form would seem to be called for.

Rubin concedes, however, that "to produce a *naïveté* history of French lyric forms between 1550 and 1630 will demand further study on a massive scale." His main purpose is to persuade us to apply rigorous criteria in examining the forms of the baroque lyric, and above all to study these poems not as samples of, for their own sake, and in their own nature. His concise, austere style - relieved by touches of dry wit - operates like a surgical instrument,

laying bare the mechanisms behind the imaginative and formal luxuries of his poems: in his virtuoso description of the way in which, in a "rupture" lyric like Théophile's "Le matin", "the violation of the literary rule is not merely appropriate but absolutely indispensable to the coherence of the poem", he demonstrates that a method some would claim to be outdated is capable of insights as probing as those of more recent theories and approaches.

The value of Mathieu-Castellani's interpretative procedure is that it attributes depth of meaning to a large body of poetry often thought to be artificial and superficial. It is true that she lapses at times into the most simplistic forms of Freudian allegory (Ixion's wheel is a "symbolic feminin", the culture an "image de la mère"); Lacan's emphasis on the linguistic character of psychoanalytic materials - which she wholly disregards - would have provided a useful corrective, and is in many ways suited to this highly conventionalized and self-nourishing poetry. But as a companion volume to her anthology, *Mythes de l'ère baroque* amply illustrates the pleasures of the neo-Petrarchist text. Actaeon and Ixion act out everyone's favourite obsessions and anxieties (though only a francophone Ixion would get the pun in "pressant la nue à son plaisir").

Chantier *m'estuet: Songs of the Trouvères*, edited by Samuel N. Rosenberg, music edited by Hans Tischlerberg, music edited by Hans Tischlerberg (360 pp., Faber, £25.00, 0 371 10042 2) is an anthology of more than two hundred songs from twelfth and thirteenth century France. The texts and music, where it has survived, are presented with a list of previous editions and musical, linguistic and literary notes. The volume also includes a bibliography, glossary and biographies of the trouvères.

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Africa Survive? was such a good book was that R. W. Johnson knew this. Maybe as a consequence he did not suffer from unreasoning optimism. Although he did not answer the question in his title precisely, he wrote: "To put it bluntly: if the Pretoria regime adopts a sufficiently ruthless and brutal policy at home it may well be able to repress black rebellion well into the twenty-first century; if it is willing to be sufficiently tough and flexible over Rhodesia and Namibia (allowing truly representative regimes to emerge there) and if it is wise enough to keep its troops at home, its future would seem secure until well into the 1990s."

All the same Johnson was naturally influenced by the events of the

time when he wrote - Soweto and its aftermath, the South African military fiasco in Angola in November 1975, and the coincident slump in the price of gold. Since then Pretoria has retrieved the situation on most fronts. Soweto was followed after a short lull by another period of internal repression, the killing of Biko and the arrests of late 1977. The South African government has accepted a representative regime in Zimbabwe, in an ill-natured and brutal way (and it has after all just as much of an economic stranglehold on Mr Mugabe's Zimbabwe as it had on Mr Smith's Rhodesia, indeed more so), and will probably accept one - after stalling as long as possible - in Namibia. It makes cautious military interventions in Angola and, by proxy, in Mozambique, but may yet learn

the wisdom of keeping its troops at home. The government has continued to undermine black opposition by force and cajolery and, as Theodor Hanf and his co-authors say, there has been over the last two or three years "fierce and increasingly bitter factional rivalry among internal [black] political leaders". Above all, gold continues to provide the lubricant which eases every change of gear. The Johannesburg brokers are now whining about the drop in the price of gold (from about \$620 per ounce in early December 1980). But even at \$390, to the disinterested observer the striking thing is that over the last ten years - the great decade of inflation - the price of gold has quadrupled in real terms.

Anyone who thinks that peaceful real change - or for that matter violent revolution - in South Africa is imminent deludes himself. So does anyone who thinks that a date for the end of white-ruled South Africa can easily be fixed. African Nationalism gives and takes lessons in realism every month. Its adapted Vervoordean apartheid has neo-apartheid and will turn neo-apartheid into something else, with a view of course to preserving its power, not surrendering it. Opponents of the South African regime have had an extended opportunity to study pragmatism, patience and cunning from their foe. False hopes should be put away. South Africa is a case if ever there was one for Gramsci's prescription: pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will.

Covering the continent

By Humphrey Fisher

ROLAND OLIVER and MICHAEL CROWDER (General Editors):

The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Africa

492pp. Cambridge University Press. £18.50.

0 521 23096 9

JOCELYN MURRAY (Editor):

Cultural Atlas of Africa

240pp. Oxford: Phaidon Press. £17.95.

0 7148 2045 8

These two volumes are at once comparable and contrasting. They are identical in price, yet the *Encyclopedia* is twice as long. Both open with the physical setting. The *Encyclopedia* then devotes 130 pages to "The African past, beginning with ancient Egypt but with just over half concerned with the European colonial period. A shorter section follows, on individual countries since independence. Then there are chapters on various contemporary themes - government, natural resources, religion, arts and recreation, and the like - concluding with three chapters on Africa and the world.

The *Atlas* has no separate historical section; more than half its main text comprises individual national entries, less strictly contemporary than those in the *Encyclopedia*, and not in any rigorous sense explicitly "cultural". The *Atlas* also includes a "Cultural" background section, covering some of the same themes as are in the historical or contemporary portions of the *Encyclopedia*; even the most narrowly cultural - architecture, arts, music and dance - receive proportionately just as much attention in both volumes (and, in one case, from the same contributor). The *Atlas*'s "cultural background" is dotted with "special features", as on Yoruba traditional religion, or on the mapping of Africa; some are rather brief - "health and healing", for example, occupies a single page. The *Encyclopedia* is not an alphabetical conglomeration of disparate entries, but rather a survey of contemporary Africa, with a strong historical background, divided rather more than usual into distinct sub-headings. The *Atlas*, fittingly, is better supplied with maps which constitute its main contribution.

Both books are lavishly illustrated; the *Atlas* with 35 pictures, mostly in colour, is the more profuse. Some of the pictures are exquisite; among my favourites is an aerial view of camels, the animals themselves almost invisible against the sand, but their tall shadows standing out starkly.

Both books are well indexed, and the *Atlas* also has a gazetteer. The *Encyclopedia* does not index its maps, and neither index covers picture details completely. Contributors are listed (a few appearing in both volumes), and all contributions are attributed; but there is no index of authors, so that it is hard to identify the sum of their respective contributions.

Sympathetic, or merely dispassionate, writing about Africa still tends towards the apologetic. Arresting claims are made in these books. Much of the argument has a greater

architectural complexity than any other continent" (than Asia?); Africans in diaspora "have been much more successful than the Jews in influencing the cultures of the societies in which they lived"; "in the 19th century the Zulu nation-state... was no more a tribe than England was under Henry VIII"; among the Massi and Fulani surgical techniques are "highly developed"; and so on. Earlier attitudes are caricatured and then lamented: "In the past, many Christian missionaries and other visitors... classed... the whole of traditional African life as primitive or barbaric"; "the city is probably the last idea one would associate with Africa" - as if all the world had not heard, long ago, of Timbuktu - and so on. European influence is regretted: "ignorance has been compounded... by knowledge of different European languages, and consequent restriction of access to information for linguistic reasons" - as if English had not given millions of Africans access to the widest possible world of information, quite

apart from being the only practicable means of direct communication between countless different African groups. (Most of the preceding examples come from the *Atlas*.) When will African studies allow Africa to stand upon its own feet? The war of apostasy is abandoned. Neither of the two greatest nineteenth-century observers of black Africa, Barth and Nachtigal, found such apologetics necessary, yet they were able to see African life pretty steadily and whole.

There is also a residual tendency to regard the quaint and exceptional as particularly African. My prize for the silliest comment in either book goes to this: "The 1970s clearly marked Africa's return to itself. The *Encyclopedia*, though it states that only between five per cent and ten per cent of Africa's Christians belong to the so-called independent churches, devotes the major part of its discussion of Christianity to these groups. Islam gets a goodish run: the Mopit mosque, on the *Encyclopedia* cover, has a two-page photograph in

the *Atlas*. I do not share the *Encyclopedia*'s confidence that Islam shows an "increasing degree of acceptance, adaptation and tolerance" of traditional faiths: the whole thrust of neo-Wahhabi fervour from Arabia and elsewhere, and less directly, of Iran's example, the whole underpinned with fabulous oil-wealth, favours a sternly fundamentalist approach.

There are inevitable problems with such books, in keeping up to date. The *Encyclopedia*'s observation that Gambia's future was once thought to lie in union with Senegal, though there is little Gambian enthusiasm for this, may be true enough, but has been overtaken by events. Less understandable is the fact that both volumes include a picture from Sierra Leone to illustrate railways, although the country closed down its railway long ago.

Although neither volume fulfils its publishers' promises of comprehensiveness, each is crammed with interesting detail of all kinds, attractively and intelligently presented.

When elephants fight

By S. K. Panter-Brick

ARTHUR GAVSHON:

Crisis in Africa

Battleground of East and West

320pp. Penguin. £3.95.

0 14 02 239 1

Arthur Gavshon's theme calls to mind the African saying, when elephants fight, the grass suffers. He sees Africa as a battleground where East and West, in pursuing their conflicting strategic, political and economic interests, offer the Africans weapons rather than food (although that too is invariably used as a weapon). He condemns both East and West in equal measure. If there are many more pains in criticism of the United States than of the Soviet Union, this is not due to any difference in aims; it is solely a reflection of the fact that Americans are able to speak and write about public policy without fear or favour. Mr Gavshon makes full use of Congressional hearings, of leaked documents, and of allegations made by disillusioned CIA agents (eg. John Stockwell). However, he considers the Soviet Union to have pursued its interests with more competence. It has profited from American mistakes and found in Cuba a handy ally.

The chapter on Cuba is the least censorious: its involvement in Africa is considered more legitimate because of its cultural affinities with Black Africa; and because it also is exposed to the pressure of East-West rivalry. Although Cuba has far more troops in Africa than any other state, Mr Gavshon considers its aid more interested and more attuned to general needs. He also insists that Cuba has not acted solely as a Soviet surrogate. On the contrary, he suggests that Cuba has acted on its own initiative, both in Angola and Ethiopia. In arguing that it minimizes Cuba's military and economic dependency on the Soviet

Union and portrays Castro as the accepted leader of the non-aligned movement. This is contended despite the strong protests within that movement against the endorsement by Castro of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, which says Gavshon, "stemmed more from socialist solidarity than from socialist convictions", a strange conception of non-alignment.

No such indulgence is shown in the chapters devoted to the United States, Britain and France. Harold Macmillan is credited with having discerned "the winds of change" but his successors are accused of having induced a "change of wind". Gavshon should perhaps have checked the text of Macmillan's speech: it reads "As I see it, the great issue in this second half of the twentieth century is whether the uncommitted people of Asia and Africa will swing to the East or to the West". There is much substance in Gavshon's argument but too often he resorts to suggestion and implication rather than clear statements of fact. For instance, the Western Powers are held responsible for having helped South Africa develop "nuclear-power status" and it is asserted that "critical sectors of the Republic's nuclear energy programme were funded despite Pretoria's refusal to adhere to the world-wide Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty". The discussion, far from clarifying the limits of Western involvement, seems to imply that Western governments have actively assisted South Africa in developing the atomic bomb, or at least condoned its secret development. Gavshon does subsequently state that the Western Powers suspended their cooperation because of South Africa's refusal to sign the Treaty, but no attempt is made to reconcile this with earlier statements and suggestions.

Britain's role in Rhodesia is, in similar fashion, made out to have been more sinister than possibly was the case. In a section entitled "The Luck of Lord Soames", Gavshon attributes the successful termination

of the struggle for power to Mugabe's overwhelming electoral victory. There is a sense in which that is true. Gavshon must however be in error when he says that Soames acknowledged in an interview that Mugabe had emerged winner with less than fifty seats - meaning without an overall margin [sic] in the hundred member parliament - it would have been possible for Nkomo and Muzorewa to form a coalition government with the support of the bloc of twenty whites whose seats had been reserved for them. This is to ignore S 69 of the Lancaster House constitution which rules out the possibility of using the twenty "white" seats to keep out a "black" party which is in the lead, albeit with only a plurality of seats. Whatever may have been Soames's secret hopes, he cannot have nurtured a design to act unconstitutionally.

It is not only in detail that Gavshon allows his argument to run ahead of facts. His general contention that Africa is the helpless victim of East-West rivalries is itself an extrapolation of a particular set of events - the collapse of Portuguese rule in 1974-5, the overthrow of Haile Selassie in 1974, and the withdrawal of the United States from Vietnam. Outside intervention has not always been so intense as in recent years; outside powers have not consistently conceived their interests in quite so single-minded a fashion nor pursued them quite so blatantly as Gavshon suggests. He has the diplomacy of the Africans themselves been so inconsequential as is implied. Nor, for example, are Islam or Nigeria given much weight as forces resistant to both East and West.

Mr Gavshon sees the conflict through the eyes of a diplomatic correspondent alarmed by recent events. The principal merit of his book is in providing an account which is up-to-date and lively. Even if the burden of the argument is questionable, it faithfully reflects present concerns.

LITERATURE

The pursuit of metaphor

By Christopher Salvesen

LAWRENCE LIPKING (Editor):

High Romantic Argument

Essays for M. H. Abrams

182pp. Cornell University Press. \$14.95

0 8014 1307 9

There are six essays in *High Romantic Argument*, making rather a small Festschrift in honour of so distinguished and learned a scholar. It is not doubt economics are to blame but it looks like short measure compared with, say, *From Sensibility to Romanticism* (1962), a book of essays presented to Frederick Pottle which included twenty-six substantial articles (three on Gray's "Elegy" alone) and to which Abrams himself contributed his seminal piece on "The Greater Romantic Lyric". The papers printed in the present volume were delivered "by friends and peers" at a two-day symposium organized at Cornell University in April 1978; but even with the addition of an "afterthought" by Abrams (plus a bibliography and an editor's note), there is by the traditional standards of such productions considerably more *Fest* than *Schiff* - though even the festive element is faintly compromised, or coloured, by the general approach.

It must, in any case, be impossible to get the tone exactly right on such an occasion, with the honoured guest sitting there and taking it all in, impossible to avoid altogether little flurries of whimsy, flattery or perversity. But furthermore, these essays, according to their editor, share and are committed to exploring a common problem: "The problem, easier to state than to manage, is simply what to make of the work of M. H. Abrams. You may well think, what a surprising difficulty. 'Something', we are told, 'in his achievement - perhaps its very solidity - puzzles a good many modern readers'. And yet, to be puzzled by *The Mirror and the Lamp* and *Natural Supernaturalism*, works dense with material but clear in purpose, does this not seem like wilful complication?

Amusingly enough, this editorial difficulty echoes one brought forward by Abrams himself towards the end of another of his seminal articles when he asks: "What are we to make of the phenomenon of the correspondent breeze in Romantic poetry?" Having surveyed the metaphor of the breeze, providing many examples and making many connections, he shows how something incisive and responsible has to be done with the collected material - the distinctively Romantic quality of the image has to be brought out. And he takes the opportunity of attacking a then fashionable doctrine (it was 1957), archetypal criticism. He is concerned at its blurring, reductive, indiscriminating approach - one "not much more than the purpose of the literary critic, whose chief concern is with the particularity of the work; nor is it more useful to the literary historian, despite his greater interest in establishing literary types and the general qualities of a literary period."

This point in Abrams's exposition of the correspondent breeze is worth recalling not only because it reminds us of how he sees his literary role and of the sensible way in which he goes about his critical business but also because, ironically enough, he himself in the present volume has become at least partly a subject and victim of current critical modishness - and incidentally because it produces a splendid bit of satire which I will quote as a tribute to the completeness of the equipment Abrams brings to his task as literary critic and historian. He is referring to *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*: "Once unleashed, indeed, the archetype proves insatiable, and goes on to assimilate even subhuman phenomena: Miss Bodkin detects the characteristic pattern of the Night Journey and Rebirth in the behaviour of Wolfgang Köhler's experimental apes, who passed through a period of baffled bewilderment before the flash of insight which enabled them to reach their banana."

Today's modishness is less open to satire if only because much of it is deliberately unsolemn; yet there is an underlying wishfulness at work, evident here in the way that Abrams's "relatively unproblematic attitude towards texts" is regarded as a kind of irritant. Do his writings really invite or require the self-reflexive, self-regarding attention of contemporary academic criticism? As before the occasion, Abrams is not satirical in his reply; he plays consistently and skilfully with the post-structuralist notions already brought

forward and defends his own position with dignity. And he makes you wonder - could there not just have been a collection of useful scholarly articles honouring the recipient by their excellence and by their general relevance to his own fields of study? "In these deconstructed radically indeterminate days", perhaps not.

He believes in history, evidence, reason, meaning, authors, texts, himself; he remains an unconstructed humanist. Such clarity of purpose can be troubling. Hence several of these essays establish a relationship to Abrams's books by darkening their counsel, reading in them, as Keats in the face of night, "huge cloudy symbols of a high romance".

The irony here, uncertain though it is in tone, pays a proper tribute to Abrams's humanism: what value *High Romantic Argument* has lies, as the title proclaims, in its being - at whatever level - an argument not a romance. The argument begins with two pieces representing Part I, "Visions of Wordsworth": "The Poetics of Prophecy" by Geoffrey Hartman and "As With the Silence of the Thought" by Jonathan Wordsworth. Abrams does not refer to either of these in his reply (as he does to the other four articles), perhaps because their desultory if energetic intellectualism offers too many points to take up, none of which seems absolutely essential. Jonathan Wordsworth one expects to represent the English empirical approach and sure enough he has good and particular things to say, though even he announces his line as wanting "to play the game of following associations" - which leads him in interesting and various directions on the subject of Wordsworth's language. He considers part of "the clumsy, half-powerful opening passage" of *Prelude* V - "Oh, why hath not the mind / Some element to stamp her image on / In nature-somewhat nearer to her own?" - and brings out the oddity and the characteristic originality of Wordsworth's point of view: "Instead of asking with Keats and others why life cannot have the permanence of art, he is asking why art cannot have the permanence of life."

Part II, "The Achievement of M. H. Abrams", begins with a piece by Wayne Booth entitled "History as Metaphor: Or, Is M. H. Abrams a Mirror, or a Lamp, or a Fountain, or...?" ("There may seem to be just a

breath of Barthes' automatic manufacture of paradox in my title..."). Booth contemplates the unavoidability of metaphor and, looking at *The Mirror and the Lamp* and *Natural Supernaturalism* ("those two curious elusive works"), goes on to ask "troublesome questions about the kind of knowledge they give us, if any". In the end he is rightly sceptical of "fashionable views that 'everything is metaphor'" and praises Abrams for "depth of specification and care in establishing... 'literal' connections".

Metaphors are of course an Abrams speciality: not surprising that contributors should show a preoccupation with what he calls here "a single aspect of my writings; that is, my use of changes in radical, constitutive metaphors as one key to important shifts in the intellectual and cultural history of the West." Abrams himself accounts for the life of the great metaphors - mirror, lamp, plant - not by reference to the mysterious goings-on of the logic of language, but only by reference to something beyond language which, applying loose-boundaried criteria, we identify as works of art. As Booth points out, Abrams's own writing is not highly metaphorical, although in writing history he naturally cannot escape using metaphor. His critical language receives some attention in the final piece by Jonathan Culler (material appearing, in different form, in his book *The Pursuit of Signs*). Abrams notes some necessary limits to the coincidence Culler observes between his (Abrams's) "treatment of metaphors and their treatment in poststructuralist writings", but he responds respectfully enough ("Culler, in addition to being brilliant, is plausible") - though Culler's deconstructive joke that *The Mirror and the Lamp* might have to be renamed *The Mire and the Swamp* seems a poor one from whatever angle you examine it.

Abrams's style, sober and apparently unremarkable (how different from the "feist-prose" of his famous pupil Harold Bloom, a notable absence on this occasion), yet moves occasionally with a decorously "rapturous pedestralism" (F. W. Bateson's memorable phrase about Wordsworth) and convulses simply by the weight of its material and the seriousness of its discourse.

The two other contributors, Thomas McFarland, who offers "A Coleridgean Criticism of the Works of M. H.

Abrams", and Lawrence Lipking, "The Genie in the Lamp: M. H. Abrams and the Motives of Literary History", both address themselves to the problem of defining Abrams's literary role. Lipking attempts a distinction between literary historians and critics: McFarland, after some reflections on the difference between reviewing and criticism, and on "the process by which canonicity is conferred on cultural offerings", and after asserting unexceptionably that critics should be learned (while reserving a point of view from which Abrams is not a critic, nor does his work qualify "for the exercise of criticism upon it"), decides that Abrams's writings occupy "a well-defined cultural position as interpretational commentary".

But finally Abrams is a teacher, not only in the sense of an educator (and, as Stephen Parrish observes in a brief Preface, one of his major roles, at least in America, is as general editor of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*), but in the full Wordsworthian sense. He would not be a true writer on Romanticism, he would not be true to his subject, if he weren't. A Romanticism based on Wordsworth, supported and confirmed by Germany, is the best version we will find, however much is conceded to those reviewers who, on the publication of *Natural Supernaturalism*, complained about its selectiveness: no Scott (deliberately), no Byron - no history, no irony. There is something encyclopedic about *The Mirror and the Lamp* (McFarland claims to have worked, over a period of several weeks, "through the entire apparatus of footnotes in that volume..."). 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